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PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN

Impact of armed conflict on children

Note by the Secretary-General

Addendum

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Annex I

STATEMENT OF THE FIRST REGIONAL CONSULTATION ON THE IMPACT OF ARMED CONFLICT ON CHILDREN IN THE HORN, EASTERN, CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN AFRICA

(Addis Ababa, 17-19 April 1995)

A threat haunts Africa - a threat challenging the stability of civil society. Liberia, Somalia and Rwanda have shockingly exposed Africa's failure to resolve its conflicts and its humanitarian tragedies. A crisis of national identity, persistent social injustice and a lack of sustained democratic processes have combined to create these tragedies. Social injustice, partly a product of bad governance, results in ethnic tension. Political leaders who lose authority exploit these ethnic tensions to maintain power, leading to more conflict.

When armed conflicts occur, children and women are the principal victims. Children are killed, maimed, orphaned or separated from their families; boys are forced to bear arms and commit violent acts themselves. Girls and women are exploited and sexually abused. It is children and women who suffer the most when schools are closed, clinics destroyed, fields sown with landmines, and markets virtually bereft of goods. Those who survive the killing fields may die later for lack of food, water or basic medicines. Those who survive even that - but witness killing, maiming, burning and looting or experience lengthy separations from their families - may be traumatized for years to come.

Too many of Africa's children and women have experienced the horrors of total war, where combatants use weapons indiscriminately to terrorize civilians, impose their will and achieved their selfish ends, where accidental distinctions of race, class or ethnicity are cynically manipulated to determine who will live and who will die. In some of these wars, neutrality is not an option. Every man, woman and child is forced to take a side; every man, woman and child is assigned to a particular group - to be protected or to be destroyed. Youth, age, and disability are no defence. Every person is equally at risk and equally terrorized. This nightmarish terror, more than any other force, has transformed the lives of African children and women.

Recognizing that this terror exists - not only in Africa but elsewhere in the world as well - the United Nations General Assembly in December 1993 unanimously called on the Secretary-General to appoint an expert to conduct a study on the impact of armed conflict on children. The Secretary-General appointed Ms. Graça Machel, former first lady and Minister of Education of Mozambique, to conduct the study. The following remarks are some of the reflections of participants meeting in Addis Ababa at the first of six planned regional consultations for the study. The participants, who attended the consultation in their personal capacities, came from 15 countries in eastern, central and southern Africa as well as other African countries. Many participants are associated with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the United Nations and various African, international and intergovernmental organizations. Eleven of the 15 countries represented are now undergoing armed

conflict or post-conflict reconstruction. Other border countries experiencing conflict are struggling both to protect refugees and to attract sufficient assistance to support development, relief and rehabilitation.

Of course, not every African country has experienced the widespread destruction seen most recently in Rwanda. These recent catastrophes have obscured several positive developments across Africa, including the spread of meaningful democracy, increased respect for human rights and remarkable successes in conflict resolution. In particular, southern African countries have recently taken responsibility for conflict situations in their midst, and West African countries, through the monitoring observer group of the Economic Community of West African States, have successfully deployed African peacekeepers in the wounded country of Liberia. In addition, recent peacemaking initiatives from the Organization of African Unity (OAU) are welcome and worthy of support.

Reflecting on recent armed conflicts in Africa, participants in the consultation affirmed their respect for sovereignty, but noted too that sovereignty implies a responsibility to protect the rights of the people. It was observed that, in those cases where Governments are unable or unwilling to protect the rights of their people, sovereignty should not be invoked to prevent the international community from protecting the rights or meeting the needs of children and other victims of conflict.

Participants also affirmed the responsibility of African Governments and the international community to protect children everywhere from the impact of armed conflict. They observed that total war - where most of the casualties are children and women - runs contrary to all basic human values and to all international standards aiming to protect civilians in situations of armed conflict, such as the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their Additional Protocols and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The participants noted an urgent need to renew basic human values and to enforce international standards which, through ignorance or wilful disregard, are too often flouted. They also stated that international standards should be strengthened to clarify the humanitarian responsibilities of all parties to a conflict and to address situations not clearly foreseen when they were initially drafted.

Participants emphasized the critical advocacy role which schools and the media could play in renewing basic values and in reducing the number and severity of armed conflicts. Some participants stated that the media often inflamed, but rarely tried to extinguish, controversies that might lead to armed conflict. Other participants noted that continued schooling - especially when some classes focus on basic human rights and values - helps to stabilize local communities, to normalize the lives of school-going children and their families and to protect children from the possible irrevocable loss of their hopes and aspirations.

Reflecting on international responses to Africa's armed conflicts, some participants expressed disappointment in the role of the United Nations. That disappointment took several forms. It was felt that the United Nations on occasion intervened too late; that the United Nations, when it did intervene, was often confused about its mandate and limited in its resources; that United

Nations forces did not always perform according to the highest standards of conduct; and that the United Nations failed to address adequately the vexing dilemma of the limits of sovereignty, especially in extreme cases of gross violation of human rights. While participants acknowledged that these were very complex issues, influenced by the widely varying views of Member States, they nonetheless felt that more must be expected of the United Nations and insisted that the study address these issues in a thoughtful and searching way. In particular, it was pointed out that the United Nations should seek self-critically and constructively to examine its shortcomings and failures with a view to ensuring that the Organization is fully relevant and effective. At the same time, other participants noted the indispensable and constructive role played by the United Nations in the transition to peace and democracy in Africa, particularly in South Africa, Namibia, Mozambique and Angola.

The participants noted that Africans and the international community must and can do better. They observed that children offer both the reason and the opportunity to take firm measures. In a world divided by race, language, politics and religion, children are a unifying force that brings all people together on a common ethical ground. The needs of all children are the same - nutritious food, adequate health care, a decent education, a secure and loving family and a life of friendship and opportunity. Children's needs and aspirations cut across all ideologies. To secure these needs, some participants urged that all parties to a conflict be strongly encouraged to recognize children as a "zone of peace". This would impose on the parties an absolute obligation to protect children from the corrupting influences of war and militarization.

As part of their own efforts to protect the rights of children in armed conflicts, participants made the following recommendations, among others, knowing well the formidable constraints facing progress in Africa today:

Because wars have profound impact on civilians, especially children and women, Africans must unequivocally renounce armed conflict as a means for resolving social, economic and political problems by:

- Recognizing clearly, in the light of the World Summit for Social Development, that the concept of human security should replace the traditional concept of military security;

- Persuading Governments to reduce military spending and to redirect investment towards human security and human development;

- Strengthening mechanisms for achieving national reconciliation as well as conflict prevention and conflict resolution, especially by including eminent African women in peacekeeping efforts;

- Persuading donors to recognize international obligations.

Africans must recognize their absolute obligation to prevent the involvement of children in situations of armed conflict:

In this context, all warring parties must:

- Stop recruiting children or otherwise using children to achieve military objectives;

- Immediately demobilize child soldiers and, with assistance from the international community, achieve their rehabilitation and integration into normal life, primarily through resuming their education;

- Protect non-combatants, and especially children and women, in combat theatres;

- Exclude agricultural land and traditional sanctuaries such as schools, hospitals, cultural and religious institutions as military targets.

<u>African countries and the international community must recognize their absolute obligations to protect and to meet the needs of children and women who are affected by armed conflict</u>:

In this context, African countries with the support of the international community must:

- Educate children about landmines and, in particular, educate girls whose traditional labours (fetching water and firewood) expose them to a greater risk of injury from landmines;

- Normalize the child's environment and, where necessary, promote physical and psychosocial recovery, through schooling, peer group activities and appropriate health measures from the child's own culture;

- Expand the concept of humanitarian assistance to include the protection of civilians and civilian institutions, and to recognize assistance to all civilians on any side of a conflict as legitimate;

- Provide access and all necessary assistance to refugees and to host populations and host countries that are heavily burdened by the refugees' presence in their midst;

- Enable families to resume primary responsibility to care for, protect and rehabilitate children affected by armed conflict;

- Limit the institutionalization of children and support family reunification programmes for children separated from their families;

- Ban arms and combatants from refugee camps and other sanctuaries;

- Protect girls and women from rape, abuse and other violence;

- Secure due process for the early rehabilitation of child prisoners and child perpetrators of violence.

Africans and the international community must restore basic human values and standards where they have been compromised by:

- Rejuvenating a sense of personal responsibility and respect for human life;

- Providing peace education to children and adults (especially community and national leaders);

- Educating aid workers and peacekeepers about international standards such as the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, to ensure that their activities accord with these standards;

- Training human rights monitors and using truth commissions and war crimes trials to expose wrongdoing and to reinforce personal accountability.

Existing national and international standards protecting children in situations of armed conflict must be effectively strengthened and enforced:

In this context, all African countries should start to implement the Convention on the Rights of the Child by translating it into national law and creating credible structures to enforce it. In addition, all parties to a conflict - governmental and non-governmental - must:

- Be encouraged formally to declare that they consider themselves bound by, and will respect and ensure respect for, the provisions of the Geneva Conventions and other international instruments relating to the rights, welfare and protection of children, particularly in situations of armed conflict;

- Educate people about the content of these documents, e.g. by simplified restatement, translation into local languages and widespread dissemination;

- Create credible structures for punishing violators of these standards;

- Call for a United Nations declaration based on the principle of children as a "zone of peace" that would allow humanitarian assistance to safeguard the interests of children through, e.g. "corridors of peace" and "days of tranquillity";

- Make judicious use of the principle of humanitarian intervention in situations where the State is no longer willing or able to prevent grotesque abuses of human rights;

- Support the project of drafting an optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child to raise the age of recruitment into armed forces;

- Implement the recommendations of the April 1992 humanitarian Summit of the Heads of State and Government of the countries of the Horn of Africa, which recognized the access rights of civilians in war and the need for schools and protective zones for civilian populations during war;

- Make better use of the media, NGOs, OAU, the United Nations bodies, the International Court of Justice and similar forums, to expose and monitor human rights abuses and to influence public opinion.

Political accountability needs to be vigorously promoted and observed by:

- Clarifying who is accountable for any action undertaken and establishing mechanisms to ensure accountability, especially for those who violate the rights of children;

- Establishing transparent processes empowering people, especially children and women, to participate in political decisions and to play an active role in conflict prevention and management.

African countries should strengthen efforts to seek collective solutions to their problems by:

- Accepting primary responsibility in responding to future peacekeeping needs in Africa, with appropriate support from the international community;

- Strengthening their capacities to perform peacekeeping functions in addition to deploying peacekeeping soldiers (where African countries already play a significant role);

- Making full and effective use of the OAU Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution and other existing subregional forums for cooperation in Africa;

- Collecting and reflecting on the lessons learned in subregional peacekeeping efforts;

- Harmonizing efforts to facilitate humanitarian intervention and peaceful neighbourly cooperation, chiefly through involving civic leaders, NGOs, professional bodies, cultural and religious organizations, and others in conflict prevention and resolution.

Significant progress must be made to reduce arms shipments to Africa and arms trade within Africa by:

- Banning the shipment of arms (including landmines) to all parties to any armed conflict and creating mechanisms to enforce the ban;

- Banning the production, sale and use of landmines and creating an international supervisory body to monitor the ban;

- Challenging government spending for military purposes in the meetings of OAU, the United Nations and other forums;

- Encouraging the flow of additional external financing to Governments which pledge to spend these funds for non-military purposes;

- Making determined efforts to assist African countries in the removal of landmines.

Appendix

STATEMENT TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS

We, the undersigned, are four children from among the millions worldwide who are the victims of armed conflicts. We make the following statement in the hope that others may be spared the suffering we have endured.

We believe that conflicts arise mostly because leaders do not listen to their peoples. To promote harmony between Governments and peoples, the United Nations should intervene peacefully to prevent armed conflicts and to protect children from their effects. Education is important because it teaches people about the terrible consequences of armed conflicts and helps them to accept that peoples are different.

Landmines kill and hurt children. They take land away. Mines left after the end of conflict cause suspicion and mistrust. All mines should be removed and no more mines should be made. Children should be informed of the dangers of mines.

It is the responsibility of soldiers to protect children in armed conflicts. Girls should be given special protection because they are often the victims of sexual abuse. When children are hurt by soldiers, leaders bear a special responsibility because they are the ones who give the orders.

After conflicts end, the truth of what happened must be known. Children must be helped to recover. They need food, clothing, housing, education and medical care, but most of all they want to build their own futures. They do not want to become dependent.

We thank Ms. Graça Machel, chairperson of the study on the impact of armed conflict on children, for agreeing to pass on our message to the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Gete ABEBE

Mohammed Ali HUSSEIN

Adam Karari ISMAIL

Eshetu TEFERA

Annex II

STATEMENT OF THE SECOND REGIONAL CONSULTATION ON THE IMPACT OF ARMED CONFLICT ON CHILDREN IN THE ARAB REGION

(Cairo, 27-29 August 1995)

The Arab region suffers chronic violence that results from various domestic, regional and international causes, including, most notably, the Arab-Israeli conflict and ideological tensions. At least half of the 21 States in the Arab League have recently experienced or continue to experience some form of armed conflict. Other forms of violence suffered by the region include internal strife, prolonged military occupations, economic and political deprivation, severe social inequity and cultural and political alienation. Recent estimates revealed that at least 2 million Arab children are refugees, and nearly 4 million are displaced. Some Arab countries have experienced uninterrupted wars or civil conflicts lasting more than a decade, making violence a part of their daily lives.

Arab children have paid dearly for the violence they suffer, in terms of death, injury, disability, abuse, torture, psychological trauma, imprisonment, recruitment into armed forces and separation from their families. They have also paid a very high price indirectly, because resources spent on warfare deprive children of developmental rights and opportunities in health, education, social welfare and basic human needs. Armed conflict, socio-economic disparity and political injustice in the Arab region have been woven into a harsh cycle. Human despair and want often fuel warfare, which in turn aggravates human despair, leading to ever more bitter and chronic warfare. The Cairo consultation declared that this situation was unfair, unnecessary and unacceptable, and that its root causes and symptoms have to be treated in all of their dimensions: political, economic, social, psychological, moral and spiritual, at the local, regional and global levels.

Most Arab individuals and States look at the issues of peace and justice as being intertwined and inseparable. The consultation recognized that the very concept of peace is often controversial in the Arab region, because peace often refers merely to the absence of war, is sometimes imposed for the purposes of others, and is not always perceived to be just.

At all of the sessions of the consultation, the following cross-cutting themes were considered: the moral and human rights of children caught in conflicts, including their right to unimpaired humanitarian assistance and psychological recovery, especially in the context of the Convention on the Rights of the Child; longer term preventive measures to reduce the incidence of armed conflict and to promote justice, tolerance and peace; the rich legacy of the Arab region in protecting children from the scourge of conflict and preventing conflict by tapping indigenous traditions of multicultural existence and pluralism; and practical proposals on how to bring about changes in people's values, attitudes and behaviour, so as to minimize the incidence of conflict and the suffering of children.

The Cairo consultation recommended two general actions that cut across the sectoral issues discussed in the different sessions:

- The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and other appropriate partners in the Arab region should document Arab experiences and lessons in protecting children in conflict situations, with a view to providing a platform for future Arab initiatives and allowing others throughout the world to share Arab experiences and lessons;

- Governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other interested parties in the Arab region, working with UNICEF and ESCWA, should formulate a plan of action, including immediate, medium-term and long-term measures to protect children who suffer violence or conflict situations, within the wider framework of full implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

1. Children as a zone of peace: discussion

In the session on children as a "zone of peace" it was noted that the number of conflicts is increasing worldwide. Nearly 90 percent of war casualties today are suffered by civilians, most of whom are women and children. Consequently, the world is witnessing a steady increase in child deaths, injuries and suffering, which are aggravated by the increasing targeting of children and other civilians, and the conscription into warfare of children below the age of 15 years.

The consultation emphasized the aim of working for the absolute and comprehensive protection of all children in situations of conflict: children should never be allowed to play an active role in warfare, and they must be offered immediate protection and assistance when a conflict erupts.

The consultation noted that the ideal - the prevention of war - requires addressing and eliminating the root causes of conflict; this in turn challenges the people of the region to work for lasting and sustainable peace, based on justice, social development and human equity as well as economic progress. Participatory, accountable and democratic governance systems are more likely than autocratic systems to value and to promote human rights and human development, and thus can better promote domestic peace and regional stability. It was also recognized that emergency assistance would continue to be necessary to alleviate suffering during conflicts, but that medium- and long-term reforms must be promoted simultaneously to protect children from conflict.

The issue of sanctions in the Arab region was discussed at some length, given that several Arab and other Middle Eastern States suffer from international sanctions. United Nations or unilateral sanctions were thought to be ineffective and to cause great hardship to children and women. They were also widely seen to have been applied in an inconsistent manner that undermined the credibility of the United Nations, often prompting some United Nations bodies and agencies to deliver emergency assistance to people suffering from sanctions imposed by other United Nations bodies and agencies.

Children generate compassion among all people, and therefore it is possible to mobilize nationally and globally for the sake of children as a zone of peace. The concept of a zones of peace can include ceasefires, corridors of peace, days of tranquillity, zones without conflict and other means of shielding children from warfare and/or assuring their continued access to essential human services during a conflict situation. The consultation urged sensitivity to regional cultural traditions, national experiences and political or psychological attitudes when advocating child rights, in order to achieve maximum credibility and results.

The work of national and international NGOs was recognized as very important for the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and should be strengthened whenever possible. One way of doing this is to encourage the participation of children and youth in promoting compliance with the provisions of the Convention and in other aspects of increasing compliance with child rights statutes, at international, national and local levels.

Some ideas deemed worthy of further study included: sending child rights monitors to conflict zones, improving dissemination of information about the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and integrating the provisions of the Convention into country-level programmes by Governments, United Nations bodies and agencies and NGOs.

1.1 Children as a zone of peace: recommendations

- National Governments, international organizations, NGOs and the media are asked to work together more effectively to designate aggression against children, including the hindering of the delivery of humanitarian aid, as a crime against humanity. An essential first step to this end is to monitor the actions of warring parties, publicly identify aggressors who knowingly harm or victimize children in a conflict situation and subject them to existing legal bodies and sanctions;

- Develop more effective monitoring and surveillance systems to enforce existing humanitarian law and the Convention on the Rights of the Child;

- Promote a broad global coalition and commitment to children as zones of peace in conflict situations;

- Successful interventions to protect children in conflict situations should be publicized and recognized, in order to expand application of the concept of children as a zone of peace;

- National and international bodies assisting or protecting children in times of war must cooperate and coordinate more effectively to shield children from the impact of war, especially by using ceasefires to strengthen the coping mechanisms of war-afflicted communities;

- Expand the concept of children as a zone of peace to include women and other civilians in war, and to offer long-term protection measures for children who are not in conflict situations;

- Launch efforts to expand the Convention on the Rights of the Child from a formal, legal agreement among States to a broad moral platform for global protection of children, women and all civilians suffering from conflicts or other situations of need;

- Hold perpetrators of violence against children, whether in conflict or non-conflict situations, responsible for their actions, even years after the violence has ended, because children themselves suffer the negative consequences of violence for a very long time, sometimes permanently;

- Amend article 38 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child to raise the age of recruitment in armies from 15 to 18 years;

- Advocate a global ban on the manufacture of anti-personnel mines, by legally banning their production and by publicly naming the mines manufacturers and lobbying in their countries;

- Press Governments and militias not to recruit or accept child soldiers. Raise the minimum age of combatants from 15 to 18 years, enforce the existing minimum age provision more strictly, promote a range of positive, suitable alternatives and incentives, including education and employment, in order to discourage the recruitment of child soldiers, and refine skills and methods for their demobilization so that the violence-prone attitudes of soldiers are not transposed into civil society after wars end;

- Capitalize on global events such as the 1996 Olympic Games to call for suspension of conflicts. Organize parallel global events that would draw attention to the suffering of children and civilians in war and the right of all children to be protected from such suffering;

- The United Nations and the international community are urged to stop enforcing economic sanctions against countries, owing to the sanctions' adverse impact on the lives of children. These sanctions contradict the basic concept of children as a zone of peace and also detract from the United Nations credibility in the Arab region, and consequently impede its efforts to promote compliance with the concept of children as a zone of peace and the Convention on the Rights of the Child;

- All Governments are asked to offer obligatory courses to all their police, soldiers and security personnel on humanitarian law and dealing with children in conflict situations.

2. Women as active agents for peace: discussion

The role of women in conflict situations as active agents for peace was analysed, taking into consideration that Arab women's movements are sometimes portrayed as having a Western orientation and approach, which prevents them from addressing the immediate and critical needs of Arab women. This renders the discussion on the role of women in peacemaking a very sensitive topic. Two case studies presented at the consultation reviewed the achievements of women's NGOs in promoting peace and in resistance movements in Lebanon and Palestine, highlighting women's multiple roles as activists, mothers, community leaders, professionals, widows and breadwinners. A third presentation highlighted the social, historical and political constraints on women's active participation in the public sphere in the Arab region.

The participants also observed that women in the Arab world have faced legal, cultural and social constraints to participation. This has determined the context of the women's human rights agenda in the Arab region, and also constrained the capacity of Arab women to play an effective role in promoting peace and development and in protecting children in times of war.

The consultation assessed violations of women's rights in the Arab region and the impact of armed conflict on women and girls, including structural violence, internal displacement, rape, access to land and property rights, security, the right to nationality, sexual violence, and increase of female heads of households. The participants reviewed structural and other forms of violence not classified as armed conflict that affect women in Arab societies, including boycotts and curfews, poverty, anti-women propaganda, child labour, gender and domestic violence, and the linkages between public violence and domestic violence.

Women's rights were discussed within the context of economic and political crises in oppressed societies and the Arab region. Prevailing attitudes in the Arab region towards women's activism were debated, including the perception of Arab feminism as an offshoot of a Western phenomenon that can only lead to the disintegration of Arab society and family, and the tendency by some to blame women and the struggle for their rights for "corrupting" Muslim societies. The participants emphasized the difficulty of organizing around women's rights in the Arab region owing to the political, historical and cultural context of women's status, as well as contradictions in the Arab region between women's legal and actual status. The consultation also discussed how political manipulation can affect women in the Arab region.

It was pointed out that girls and women usually do not have the same access as boys and men to education and other resources, and that their roles and responsibilities are portrayed stereotypically in the media and in curricula. The role of men in the family context and as perpetrators of conflict and violence was also discussed, and the need to create an environment for attitudinal changes regarding the role and rights of women and girls was affirmed.

2.1 Women as active agents of peace: recommendations

- Arab Governments, NGOs and other relevant parties are urged to strictly enforce international humanitarian law that protects all children, irrespective to their gender, and promotes gender equality, particularly the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. In particular, Arab States that have not done so are urged to ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and all States are urged to ensure that domestic legislation conforms with the provisions of the Conventions. Arab States are also urged to ensure women's full rights by removing any contradictions or gaps between international laws and constitutional guarantees of equal rights for men and women, on the one hand, and existing legal discrimination between men and women, on the other;

- Governments, national NGOs and international organizations are urged to increase their advocacy for women's human rights and to support and strengthen women's institutions and organizational efforts at the local, national and international levels. Such efforts should include the use of mass media and other community communication channels, perhaps also including international broadcasting services for women and children. They should impact on the full range of women's needs, rights, potentialities and aspirations, including areas such as democratization, economic development, peacemaking, conflict resolution and prevention, sustainable human development and child survival. There is also a need to encourage attitudinal change among men and women; to create opportunities for the advancement of women and girls in non-traditional roles and professions; to support national and regional NGOs which sensitize their communities to gender issues by drawing upon cultural and religious values to give cultural legitimacy to their cause;

- There is a need to increase resources to women in order to support their additional caretaking responsibilities resulting from armed conflict; this can be done through the provision of services, loans and credit, and the promotion of women's economic empowerment. Special support should be given to households headed by women in displaced communities;

- The nature and consequences of violence against women, including sexual violence, should be documented and highlighted, as well as the linkages between warfare, a culture of violence, domestic violence and sexual violence against women and children;

- Rape should be condemned as an act of violence and preventive and remedial action should be taken to protect all women and girls against sexual violence;

- Rape against women and girls in wartime should be designated as a war crime and measures should be taken to ensure that perpetrators of rape crimes are brought to trial as criminals of war;

- Gender analysis should be used to look at the differential impact of armed conflict on men and women, in order to design effective responses for the protection and care of families. The physical, social and psychological impact of war on women should be studied and given increased attention.

3. Community-based approaches to psychological recovery and social reintegration: discussion

Reviewing Arab experiences in social and psychological recovery during and after armed conflict, the participants noted the importance of looking at recovery and reintegration of children in a holistic manner that includes all aspects of the wider community and its values. Recovery and reintegration of children who have suffered violence require the full participation of the community and all of its material, human and moral assets.

The participants emphasized the critical role of the family and the community in psychological rehabilitation, especially owing to the communal nature of Arab culture, in which extended families and tribal networks provide significant support in times of need. All participants agreed that basic education is a critical means of recovery, and noted the close relationship between basic education and peace education. They also stressed the importance of training a range of specialists and other community members for increasing society's ability to provide families with techniques that can help them to cope better in conflict situations. The importance of play for children recovering from war trauma was also touched upon. The participants stressed the importance of providing some normalcy for children who undergo situations of violence. The critical importance of quick intervention was recognized. Time heals, but time heals more quickly if interventions start as soon as possible after the onset of a conflict.

The situation of children in Yemen suggested a need for greater sensitivity to local cultural particularities in devising interventions for psychological adjustment and care in war situations. The situation of children in Gaza pointed out how children can have both positive and negative perceptions of practitioners of violence and extremism on both sides of a conflict, and how such perceptions can have a lasting impact on children. The participants raised the question of the consequences of violence on the aggressor as well as on the victim. Research work in Lebanon highlighted the very high rates of trauma, depression, stress and other psychological ailments due to war. In some countries such as Palestine and Lebanon, an entire generation has lost its childhood to war, and reintegrating this generation into normal civil society will be a major challenge. Discussion also dealt with the need to formulate different rehabilitation programmes to cater for different trauma situations. It was pointed out that the way to approach child soldiers might differ from the way in which children who have been living under the stress of war for a long time are approached.

3.1 Community-based approaches: recommendations

- The comprehensive and complete recovery, rehabilitation and care of traumatized children should be affirmed as a basic right of all children, in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Comprehensive and complete recovery should include physical, psychological, social, nutritional, educational and other aspects of a child's well-being;

- Governments, NGOs, specialized professionals and international bodies are requested to develop training and information modules comprising simple, easy-to-apply techniques for community-based psychological and physical recovery and social reintegration of children impacted by war. The use of such modules by various institutions in society, such as the mass media or religious groups, should be promoted so as to reach families with effective information that they can be easily applied;

- There is a need to expand training programmes for teachers, social workers, health personnel, parents and others in the community with whom children come into contact on a daily basis, in order to increase society's capacity to cope with the complete rehabilitation and reintegration of children;

- Emergency humanitarian assistance should be expanded to include basic education as a fundamental human need and "psychological first aid" for children in conflict situations, so that they can start recovering even at the onset of an emergency situation.

4. Education for tolerance and global education: discussion

The education of a child far transcends formal schooling, because a child's values and attitudes are formed by contacts outside school, with the family, peers, the community, the media, the religious establishments, the Government and others. The participants emphasized that working for social justice, tolerance and peace is a highly skilled and demanding work that requires training and professionalism. It was suggested that healers and reconciliators be recruited and mobilized from the ranks of educators and others in society to promote justice and peace among the young of our societies.

The participants reviewed examples of community and national summer camps and other interventions that have helped to promote dialogue, healing, forgiveness, reconciliation and peace. They noted the need for further work to explore how such positive efforts could be expanded to involve society as a whole. The notion of peace needs to be defined around human development in its broadest sense. The importance of social tolerance and inner peace was emphasized as a prerequisite for political peace, both within States and between States. It was also agreed that genuine, sustainable peace can occur more quickly in societies that enjoy social justice, human dignity and participatory decision-making than in societies characterized by autocracy, inequity and economic disparity.

The quality, relevance and content of formal basic education were discussed and were found to be lacking throughout the Arab world. The participants agreed that there is an urgent need to replace rote learning with critical, analytical thinking and more open debate. This would help develop children's positive social skills, attitudes and values. The key to quality education lies in the quality of teachers. This can often compensate for deficiencies in curricula, buildings and other educational resources. Cooperative rather than competitive learning is also an important ingredient for promoting such values as tolerance and interdependence.

Discussions also dealt with education methodologies that attempt to instil values of tolerance, justice, gender equity, interdependence, self-awareness, non-violent conflict resolution and environmental protection, such as peace education, education for development, and global education. It was noted that these programmes need to be defined clearly, and consensus was gained on the necessity of targeting quality education. Some of these programmes are already in the process of implementation in some Arab countries: global education in Lebanon and Jordan and education for peace in Egypt. It was emphasized that the content of these programmes should be carefully designed by Arab educators to respond to indigenous needs, aspirations and experiences. It was also suggested that relevant NGOs be involved in decision-making processes concerning changes in national curricula.

4.1 Education for tolerance/global education: recommendations

- Governments, educators and other concerned parties are urged to:
    - Continue to advocate strongly for improving the content and quality of education, especially basic education;
    - Ensure that education is firmly rooted in the traditional and national values of the country in question, and the broader values of the Arab region;
    - Promote and circulate such universal human values as tolerance, justice, gender equity, interdependence, self-awareness, environmental protection and other life skills that can help promote the prevention and resolution of conflict, the enhancement of peace and stability and the well-being of the Arab community and of humankind as a whole;
    - Promote further improvements in teacher quality, curricular reform and educational methodologies which are conducive to critical thinking, creativity, dialogue and other constructive values and skills, as defined through the local culture's experiences and values;
- Governments, educators, NGOs and concerned international bodies are asked to affirm that formal, non-formal and informal education interventions delivered through a variety of community channels form an essential part of children's learning experience, and that these should be accessible to children in situations of conflict;

- Parents and youth, along with experts and practitioners, should be given more opportunity to play an active role in contributing to the design, content and implementation of curricula and educational methodologies, especially those designed to instil moral values and attitudinal change;

- Governments and practitioners are urged to ensure transparency and public debate in all aspects of educational planning, including the selection of content and the assessment and implementation of learning;

- NGOs should take part in monitoring and assessing the revision of curricula;

- All Arab countries, without exception, are urged to promote the common values of tolerance and mutual respect.

5. Role of media and social communication channels in situations of armed conflict and violence: discussion

Media and community communication channels in the Arab world only occasionally highlight the rights of children in conflicts or violent situations. At the same time, however, Arab society has been a world leader in mobilizing communities to improve the health and well-being of children. This indicates a need to explore more carefully how informal and formal Arab communication channels can mobilize society for the well-being and protection of children. The media are also important to the well-being of children because of the many ways in which they impact on the character and values of children. The ongoing modernization, liberalization and fragmentation of many contemporary Arab societies suggest the need to use multiple channels to reach different audiences.

The mass media is a tool for education and value-formation among youth, and as such it should be recognized and used constructively. In peacetime, it was noted, the media projects a considerable amount of violence onto the minds of children, but it can also be used to help children develop the critical thinking they need to be able to cope with the violence they encounter in their daily lives. In war and peace situations, the media could constructively play a double role: promoting conflict resolution through peaceful means, and preventing conflict through programmes which promote tolerance and peaceful coexistence.

It was noted that national and international media has not sufficiently pointed out obvious violations of international humanitarian law in conflicts in the Arab region, and indeed has often taken sides. The mass media cannot end warfare, but if informed, professional and activist it can help to expand compliance with humanitarian laws in order to reduce the suffering of children and other civilians caught in war situations. Arab, Western and international media professionals selectively choose the nature and tone of their coverage of important issues, usually on the basis of their ideological or commercial interests. The example of child soldiers and their treatment in Arab and global media - whether vilified or admired - shows how such selectivity operates.

The media's dominance by commercial entertainment and political ideologies makes it difficult to use as an advocate for children. The advent of the satellite-based commercial media market, which is beyond the control of Governments, requires creative and diligent research efforts to develop new means of using these systems to reach families with information that can promote the well-being and protection of children. It was agreed that such use of the media must be undertaken with deep cultural sensitivity to local values, experiences and aspirations.

It is impossible to separate media coverage of child rights issues from the wider social, economic and political context of third world societies; similarly, it is hard to differentiate between the exploitation of children in times of war or peace, for in both cases economically stressed families find their children gravitating towards labour markets or armies/militias.

Arab-owned media in the region and internationally has not used its access to mass audiences to work sufficiently for children's rights and other humanitarian issues. It was agreed that Arab individuals and institutions should be actively involved in launching public international information campaigns to promote values of tolerance and respect for international conventions on protection of children, women and civilians in conflict situations. This should parallel domestic efforts to promote a new Arab attitude to the enforcement of international conventions and other means of protecting children. It was suggested that a global mass media network be launched to provide politically impartial broadcasting emphasizing humanism instead of particular ideologies or commercial interests.

5.1 The role of the media: recommendations

- UNICEF, NGOs, Governments and concerned specialists are asked to continuously provide media professionals with information that can be used to promote the well-being of children. This effort should comprise at least four separate components:

  - Provision of information, facilities and training to mass media personnel, in order to stimulate their interest in, and awareness of, child rights issues and to improve their ability to cover such issues in an accurate manner;

  - Offering of annual prizes, awards or other incentives to encourage and reward good media coverage on child rights;

  - Production of good quality, conveniently accessible information by the United Nations family and other national and international bodies, for easy use by the media, especially on emerging issues such as child soldiers;

  - Development of a more professional and competitive information marketing strategy aimed at the mass media by the United Nations, international and national agencies, in order to generate more effective media coverage of child rights issues around the world;

- NGOs and other community groups should be trained in ways of using the mass media to promote child rights' issues;

- NGOs in the Arab world are requested to establish one or more media watch groups to routinely monitor and rate the performance of national, regional and international media in four specific areas:

  - Coverage of issues related to the rights of children, women, civilians, ethnic and religious minorities in times of conflict and peace;

  - Role in reporting and monitoring violations of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international conventions related to the protection of children, women and other civilians;

  - Depiction of children, with particular attention to their manipulation for political ends;

  - Treatment of violence and its impacts on children, including their depiction of children and women in times of war;

- Media organizations are requested to provide children with unfettered access to the media so that they may present their views without being manipulated. Governments, NGOs and international organizations are asked to lobby for greater participation of children in the media;

- Mass media institutions in the Arab world are requested to consult with educators so as to use the media to deliver emergency basic education programming when the normal education system ceases to function due to warfare.

Annex III

STATEMENT OF THE THIRD REGIONAL CONSULTATION ON THE IMPACT OF ARMED CONFLICT ON CHILDREN IN WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA

(Abidjan, 7-10 November 1995)

I. PATTERNS AND UNDERLYING CAUSES OF ARMED CONFLICTS IN WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA

Large areas of West and Central Africa have become boiling cauldrons of tension and conflict. Development in countries such as Chad, Congo, Gambia, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Zaire has been stymied by economic, political and social crises for periods lasting as long as 10 years. Many of these countries are in situations of armed conflict and prolonged insecurity.

The vestiges of colonialism and persistent economic, social and political crises have greatly contributed to the disintegration of public order. The collapse of functional Governments in many countries of the region, the personalization of power and leadership and the manipulation of ethnicity and religion to serve personal or narrow group interest have fomented inequalities, grievances and conflict.

"Total war" is increasingly being waged within national boundaries. Nothing is spared in the quest for power and control - not crops, nor women, children, schools, health-care facilities or places of worship. Unbridled attacks on civilians and rural communities have provoked mass flights and displacement of entire populations in search of ephemeral sanctuaries within and outside national borders. Children and women constitute the overwhelming majority among the uprooted millions in the subregion and other trouble spots in Africa. These wars are characterized by the indiscriminate destruction of lives and property and unprecedented numbers of human rights violations against children and women. Increasingly, children have become both targets and perpetrators of violence and atrocities.

Many Governments have contributed to the increasing militarization of society and the creation of a culture of violence and insecurity, where banditry and pillage have become the norm. Military expenditure within the region is glaringly disproportionate to spending on education, health or social development. In many conflict theatres, Governments and opposition forces have resorted to the use of mercenaries.

Recommendations

Root causes of conflicts in West and Central Africa

1. African regional, subregional and national research institutions, associations and networks, such as the Council for Development of Economic and Social Research in Africa (CODESRIA), the African Association of Political Science and others, should intensify their efforts to systematically assess the

patterns and causes of conflict and provide data on their impact on women and children.

2. Civil society organizations at the national, regional and subregional level, should establish mechanisms to ensure a due process of accountability for those who have violated the rights of women and children in conflict situations.

3. National dialogues, involving the military and civil society, should be organized in all African countries with a view to changing the attitudes of the military and enlisting its support for democracy, good governance and conflict prevention. This should be reinforced through training in these areas, particularly in human rights and with specific reference to the protection of women and children in times of war and peace.

4. The concept of children as a zone of peace must be defended vigorously. Children must be made untouchable and inviolate, and active measures must be taken to ensure this, even during the height of armed conflicts.

Child rights

5. As the first subregion (consisting of 23 countries) to have ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Governments in West and Central Africa are called upon to implement its provisions and to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. This is to be undertaken with the full support of UNICEF, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), NGOs and civil society organizations.

6. Regional organizations and the international community must collaborate to censure Governments and armed groups that flout the standards of the Convention. Remedies for violations should also be considered.

7. All national and grass-roots NGOs are urged to widely disseminate the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women to create an enabling environment for child rights activities. Networks of professionals such as paediatricians, lawyers and educators are also encouraged to raise the issues of children and war in all their work.

8. The United Nations, the international community and Africa's regional and subregional organizations must act to declare the targeting of children and their recruitment as soldiers as a war crime and crime against humanity.

9. Children have the right to help shape their own lives. They have the right to their own beliefs and to express them, and to participate in decisions affecting their lives. Children must be an integral part of the design and implementation of programmes and strategies directed towards their care.

Arms trade, shipment and mercenaries

10. The United Nations is called upon to ensure the effective enforcement of a total ban on arms shipments to conflict areas in Africa and work for a total ban on the production, stockpiling and export of anti-personnel landmines.

11. International, regional and national institutions are urged to strengthen their advocacy and monitoring functions in this regard with a focus on the most vulnerable countries as a priority.

12. Governments and armed opposition groups who engage mercenaries must cease forthwith this practice. In this regard, the Organization of African Unity Convention on the Elimination of Mercenarism in Africa should be strictly enforced.

13. Africa's civil society organizations at the regional, subregional and national levels are urged to establish networks and mechanisms to systematically monitor, publicize and disseminate findings about the transfer and supply of arms to the various conflicts areas in Africa.

Other general recommendations

14. The flexible interpretation of the principle of "non-interference" in the internal affairs of member States - which has enabled OAU to undertake creative initiatives in peace-building and resolution - should be strengthened to reflect the dynamism of African common bonds and traditional norms of shared responsibility for the welfare of every member of the community, be it intra- or across borders.

15. The Organization of Africa Unity, the Economic Commission for Africa and subregional bodies such as Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) must develop a more proactive capacity and role in conflict prevention, management and resolution.

16. African countries, with the support of international partners, must make education for peace and tolerance an integral part of all levels of the formal education system. National NGOs must also strengthen their efforts in fostering informal and non-formal education for reconciliation and development.

17. Chairperson of the study on the impact of armed conflict on children, Ms. Graça Machel, is called upon to lead a delegation of eminent African women leaders and children affected by armed conflicts to address the 1996 Summit of the Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity to underscore the need for decisive and urgent action to mitigate the impact of conflict on women and children.

II. VIOLENCE AND SEXUAL ABUSE AGAINST WOMEN AND CHILDREN

Gender violence has become a systematic weapon of war and repression. The use of rape as an instrument of war and social destruction is a phenomenon which the late twentieth century can call its own, and Africa is no exception. In conflict situations, parents, and especially mothers, are critically important to a child's survival and development.

Motherhood is only one aspect of women's lives. Women are also workers, heads of household, leaders, activists, sisters, daughters, wives and widows. Women are essential to the survival of their families and communities, and have

economic, reproductive and mental health needs that extend well beyond their role as mothers.

In situations of armed conflict, and even in times of peace, displaced and refugee women and girls have special reproductive, maternal health care and mental health counselling needs that are related to the effects of rape and sexual abuse, pregnancy and childbirth complications, poor sanitation conditions in camps, and the loss of traditional community supports. Health education, preventive care and counselling are especially important for women and girls who have been raped, who have undergone female genital mutilation or who have been forced into prostitution and are more vulnerable to sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS.

Recommendations

18. Africa's civil society organizations at the regional, subregional and national level are called upon to document the particular nature and consequences of violence against women, including sexual violence, in situations of conflict and peace. They are called upon to further document the various linkages between warfare, the culture of violence, domestic violence and sexual violence against women and children.

19. Child advocacy organizations must develop systematic media campaigns to reinforce the human rights of women and girls and to help reverse negative socialization processes.

20. Child advocacy organizations are called upon to develop gender sensitization training for educators, judicial authorities, the police and army.

21. Humanitarian and relief agencies are urged to develop gender sensitive responses for the care and protection of women and girls in conflict situations, including the provision of appropriate health services and trauma counselling for victims of violence.

22. The United Nations is called upon to declare rape as a weapon of war and a crime against humanity, and to work with national entities to ensure the strict enforcement of this standard.

23. Legislation pertaining to rape and sexual assault is applicable regardless of the victim's age. Defilement, the rape or sexual assault of a girl less than 14 years of age, shall enact no lesser punishable charge, as is the case in some West and Central African countries.

24. Africa's regional and subregional organizations must ensure the active involvement of women in conflict prevention, peacemaking and conflict resolution.

III. CHILD SOLDIERS

The use of children as weapons of war is an affront to humanity. In West and Central Africa, children, as young as 8 and 10 years of age have been forcibly recruited, coerced or induced to become combatants. Although exact

figures are unavailable, the estimated 20,000 to 50,000 child combatants often cited is considered an underestimate. Approximately 90 per cent of all child soldiers are boys. Survival, self esteem, revenge of the death of family members, peer group pressure and coercion by adults and family members are some of the factors compelling children to participate in the wars in West and Central Africa.

The demobilization of child soldiers has been constrained for a variety of reasons, including the lack of political will on the part of military leaders; the absence of sanctions against recruitment; weak national demobilization structures; and the social disintegration of families and communities.

There is an urgent need to develop guidelines for the psychological recovery and social reintegration of child soldiers. Several issues related to programming were emphasized: (1) children have experienced conflict both as perpetrators and victims of violence; (2) communities and others traumatized by war may perceive demobilization and reintegration programmes as "rewards" to combatants; (3) beneficiaries often have heightened expectations of programmes and services; (4) donors often have a weak understanding of the funding requirements; (5) psychological recovery and improved socio-economic conditions require sustained and long-term interventions; (6) few employment, vocational or educational opportunities may exist in war-torn communities.

Programme responses must be developed in the best interest of the child along the continuum: the prevention of children's participation in armed conflicts, disarmament and demobilization, interim care, family reunification and social reintegration.

Recommendations

25. All warring parties, government and non-State, to conflict, are urged to demobilize all child soldiers under the age of 18 immediately.

26. International and national civil society organizations and human rights groups should develop systems for exposing violators of child rights and other human rights conventions in times of war. Efforts should be made to ensure that the conscription age, limited to 18 years, is adhered to at all times.

27. Governments should ban or censor war films and prohibit the sale of war games and toys in war-torn countries.

28. While clinical and medical treatment of war affected and traumatized children can be effective, field experience has demonstrated that family and community-centred approaches to psychological recovery and social reintegration are significantly more effective and should be developed.

29. Psychosocial support and other relevant assistance should also be made available to other victims such as institutionalized children, disabled children, and those suffering from acute mental and psychological distress.

30. The war trauma college in Liberia should be strengthened so that it can serve as a regional training and research centre in West Africa and Central Africa.

IV. PREVENTING ARMED CONFLICT AND MITIGATING ITS IMPACT ON CHILDREN AND WOMEN

The most compelling challenge facing Africans today is to stop the wars that have devastated entire nations, communities and families. Africans must take leadership in fulfilling their moral obligation to protect and care for those rendered most vulnerable by armed conflicts. They need to shatter the political inertia that has impeded the care and protection of civilians, and especially children and women. The fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations signals an important juncture to develop an integrated and comprehensive approach to preventive development. Towards this end, the capacity of organizations at regional, subregional and national levels should be strengthened in the areas of conflict prevention and preventive diplomacy.

This will require, in the first instance, strategies that address the root causes of conflict and promote sustainable human development. Democratization, good governance and a functional civil society are essential for the protection of human rights. Preventive strategies that respond to the systemic economic crises and environmental degradation affecting many countries in conflict or on the verge of conflict are essential. African Governments must reconsider the consequent changing role of the military in "internal" conflicts as well as ways in which the military can be used to protect civilians and promote conflict resolution. Training in human rights and humanitarian law and other preparedness measures are also important at all levels of Government and civil society.

Africans must build upon local traditions of conflict prevention, peacemaking, peacekeeping and conflict resolution and involve women centrally in these efforts. The family is an important social, economic, and cultural institution where healthy attitudes can be fostered. The role of the African family in promoting education for peace and reconciliation must be strengthened in conjunction with other informal and non-formal educational approaches that promote reconciliation and harmony.

Recommendations

31. OAU is urged to collaborate with regional, subregional and national NGOs and governmental entities to develop its preparedness measures and early warning systems (EWS). Towards this end, a practical "how-to kit" should be developed for use by Governments, agencies and NGOs.

32. OAU is urged to further systemize the collection and dissemination of all relevant information pertaining to emergency and conflict situations.

33. African research institutions are urged to study the application of indigenous and traditional mechanisms of conflict resolution to contemporary situations of conflict.

34. OAU is urged to convene a meeting of army chiefs of staff to discuss preparedness measures and participation in an African regional rapid reaction force. Member States are urged to maintain specially trained and equipped contingents to participate in the rapid reaction force.

35. Human rights and child advocacy organizations at the national level are urged to establish truth commissions at national, regional and district levels to document the incidence and extent of abuse of women and children in conflict situations.

36. Governments, in cooperation with organizations of civil society, are urged to adopt measures that focus on the implementation of humanitarian law and that strengthen the judicial structures of countries in conflict and post-conflict situations.

37. The United Nations is called upon to allocate increased resources to preventive development strategies that address the root causes of conflict.

V. SELECTED INITIATIVES

At the consultation, participants representing a diverse range of NGOs, agencies and civil society identified three main areas for further discussion. A session was added to the programme agenda for bilateral discussions to agree upon plans of action in the following areas:

(1) The promotion of the rights of the child in situations of armed conflict;

To promote child rights advocacy and networking at the national and regional levels, as well as the application and monitoring of international standards at the national level.

(2) Regional networking in the area of trauma counselling for children affected by armed conflicts;

To propose ways and means to establish and operationalize an effective network system in the area of trauma counselling in the West and Central Africa subregion to ensure the protection and well-being of children and women in situations of armed conflict.

(3) National truth commissions for reconciliation;

To explore the potential of national truth commissions as a mechanism at the national level to help facilitate social reintegration and reconciliation. The working group considered various strategies to document human rights violations, as well as mechanisms of recourse (including legal action, cultural sanction, pardon or clemency) by Governments, human rights organizations, civil society and other interested persons.

Appendix I

EXTRA PLENARY DISCUSSIONS

Group One: IMPUNITY: Methods for publicizing/documenting crimes against children and women caught in conflict situations.

How to establish national truth commissions by national civil society organizations?

Chairperson: Ms. Mary Okumu, Forum for African Voluntary Development (FAVDO), Senegal

The consultation recommended further discussion of the potential of national truth commissions as a mechanism at the national level to help facilitate social reintegration and reconciliation. The working group noted the existence of 16 national truth commissions worldwide in countries such as Argentina, Burundi, El Salvador, South Africa, Uganda and Viet Nam. The Uganda experience was considered as an important model. The Commissions have sought to ensure justice for victims, and to facilitate healing, reconciliation, and the reconstruction of affected families, communities and nations. The working group considered various strategies to document human rights violations, as well as mechanisms of recourse (including legal action, cultural sanction, pardon or clemency) by Governments, human rights organizations, civil society and other interested persons.

The working group noted both the importance of government support for the national truth commission process and concern for situations in which members of Government were implicated in human rights violations. The group recommended that NGOs with broad popular support and experience with human rights work should take leadership of an independent process supported by aggrieved families/communities, civic organizations, NGOs and interested individuals.

The group stressed the need for national truth commissions to reassert the fundamental importance and respect for the sanctity of human life, and to establish ethical, moral, legal and political accountability of leaders and civil society more broadly. They should emphasize alternatives to retribution that build on African traditions of forgiveness and reconciliation.

Recommendations

Mechanisms for national truth commissions:

- National truth commissions should provide strong sanctions inspired by and drawn from African traditions (including the practice of publicly shaming violators and the barring from public office);

- NGOs and others are encouraged to develop mechanisms to help prevent crimes and abuses against children;

- National truth commissions should also facilitate the rehabilitation of violators;

- National truth commissions, in cooperation with other human rights and civil society organizations, are urged to establish mechanisms for ensuring accountability of the political leadership;

- National truth commissions and others are urged to promote civic education for national leaders, schools and other social institutions.

Recommendations

Methods for documenting and publicizing crimes against children:

- Improve networking among NGOs and regional civic organizations on issues of war crimes in Africa;

- Identify supportive journalists (in print and electronic media) in war-affected countries/subregions to advocate/promote a society free from crimes against children and women;

- Coordinate pictorial and written documentation and dissemination of testimonies, with a special emphasis on the experiences and violations of women's and children's rights.

Group Two: ARMED CONFLICTS AND CHILDREN: Promotion and protection of the rights of the child

NETWORKING: Who takes the lead in the region?

Chairperson: Ms. Zoe Tembo, Executive Director, African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies, Gambia

The working group proposed the following areas of action:

1. Sensitization

NGOS represented at the consultation are urged to mount a vigorous public information campaign in their respective countries, to ensure that parents, families, schools and policy makers in the various government departments become conversant with the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other human rights conventions relating to children and women's welfare.

2. Networking

UNICEF is urged to take the lead to build a network, in all countries of the subregion, that would help coordinate NGOs and individuals engaged in the promotion of child rights and facilitate information sharing.

3. Data bank

Establish a centralized data bank to provide relevant and timely information to organizations and practitioners working in the area of child rights and welfare.

4. Review mechanism

Where appropriate, assist Governments to develop new legislation and to integrate the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and other relevant instruments into national laws and judicial systems.

With support from UNICEF and UNIFEM, multilateral and subregional bodies, including ECA, the African Development Bank, OAU and other specialized development agencies, are urged to establish an effective mechanism to monitor and review compliance and implementation of all laws pertaining to the rights and welfare of children and women.

5. Machel study

The Machel study group is urged to mobilize resources to develop and fund all possible measures that will contribute to reduce the suffering of children whose lives have been shattered by war.

Group Three: Trauma counselling prevention and community-based methodologies for healing for child soldiers, refugee and displaced children, and violently abused women and girls.

Chairperson: Dr. Esther Guluma, Programme Officer, UNICEF Kenya

Objective: To propose ways and means to establish and operationalize an effective network system in the area of trauma counselling in the West and Central Africa subregion to ensure the protection and well-being of children and women in situations of armed conflict.

Strategy: The network should have three basic components:

Information flow;

Structure or mechanism; and

What-who-when modalities for guiding action and monitoring of progress.

1. Information

The bodies which should be linked in a flow and exchange of information should include youth and women organizations, as well as colleges, universities and research institutions which will assist in the handling of training programmes. Social workers, clinical psychologists, gynaecologists, traditional

healers, nurses and paramedics are examples of the professionals who should be linked in the flow of information to and from the network.

The general database should cover early warning indicators on refugee/displaced persons movement as well as economic changes in the area and their impact on communities. Numbers of child soldiers, sex workers, handicapped children and reports of sexual violence such as rape should be monitored and included as data on child rights abuses. A clearing house to handle research results, case studies and models of project interventions should also be provided.

2. Structure/mechanism

The structure should include a children's national network for each country and a children's regional network to coordinate the exchange of information. Some of the effective tools that could be used are newsletters, direct exchange visits and meetings, which could be conducted as frequently as necessary on the national network level and at least once a year on the regional network level.

3. What-who-when modalities for action

As an immediate need, a training institute for para-professionals to deal with trauma among war affected children must be set up in the francophone countries, using and improving on the Liberian model for the rehabilitation of child soldiers. Governments and professional organizations should get together to do this now.

Trauma prevention and treatment materials should be prepared and ways must be found to include them in school curriculum as well as community based rehabilitation activities. Key areas to cover in this respect are needs of child soldiers, other traumatized children and women, and women and children who have suffered physical and psychological abuse.

A referral centre for the treatment of trauma must be provided for. It must focus on community based measures, using holistic approaches at all times and linked to other ongoing rehabilitation activities in the communities.

Appendix II

STATEMENT BY THE UNION OF AFRICAN PAEDIATRIC SOCIETIES AND ASSOCIATIONS

The Union of African Paediatric Societies and Associations (Dakar) will address the health and human rights impact of war on children in Africa and plans to conduct a pre-Congress workshop on children and war at the time of its next African Congress scheduled to be held in Kampala, Uganda, in November 1996.

This effort will be made in coordination with the International Paediatric Association which, at its International Congress in Cairo in September 1995, addressed issues of children and war and passed resolutions on these issues.

Dr. Ihsan Dogramau (Turkey), Honorary President

Dr. Gavin Arneil (Glasgow, United Kingdom), President

Dr. Robert Haggerty (Rochester, United States of America), Executive Director

Dr. Jane Schaller (Boston, United States of America), Consultant - children and war.

Appendix III

STATEMENT BY CHILDREN PARTICIPANTS FROM LIBERIA

We are extremely grateful to UNICEF, Ms. Graça Machel and her study team for permitting us to share our views, proposals, dilemmas and dreams with this august body. We are also grateful that we can join our eastern, southern and northern African brothers and sisters in identifying the problems affecting us.

The fact that we have been ill-treated is strange in no society. In making our rights known, we must not forget the rights also of our mothers, who out of their diligent efforts have brought us into this world, not with the idea of us joining them in suffering, but that we (make) the betterment in changing the lives of both us and them. But we have both suffered the hardships of wars, namely, hunger, trauma, malnutrition, death, etc.

We noticed the deep emotions expressed by each and every one of you after you had heard our experiences. But we are concerned not only with the showing of emotions, but also with the energizing of those emotions to "excavate" those same happenings that we consider Nightmares.

The issues for which we require immediate actions are:

1.	Education	which will adequately prepare us to continue the good work that a few of you have started;
2.	Decision-making	that we partake in decisions governing our families, countries and the world in general;
3.	Rights emphasis	that our rights be made known and strict measures taken against violators;
4.	Peace promotion	that peace be promoted within every country, namely, with armed conflict or not;
5.	Development	the international community, the United Nations and the world in general develop structures that will promote the health and education of both women and children;
6.	Zones of peace	we noticed also that only few children engaged in peaceful programmes and serve as peacemakers, e.g. Liberia's student palava management committee.

With all the above-mentioned points taken into consideration, children of countries engaged in armed conflict will be able to talk like children, think like children, engage in child play instead of wars and will not be left with the responsibility of finding their own food or waiting and thinking all day about whether daddy or mommie will bring food home or whether the night will be spent without an attack from armed robbers.

It is our fervent hope that with the Almighty on your side, our petitions will be granted to make us happy children, who are needed to build a better world tomorrow.

Annex IV

STATEMENT OF THE FOURTH REGIONAL CONSULTATION ON THE IMPACT OF ARMED CONFLICT ON CHILDREN IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

(Manila, 13-15 March 1996)

Through the Convention on the Rights of the Child, promises have been made to our children that their rights shall be respected and that they shall have the care and security to ensure their survival, development, protection and participation in all of the dynamic developments that are taking place in the Asia Pacific region. It must be recognized that ongoing and potential conflicts in many parts of the region threaten the gains made in regard to child rights. Child survival, development and protection foster child participation, while child participation expresses the philosophy and is the key to child survival, development and protection.

Child participation in armed conflict and the violence and deprivation in conflict situations deny the child's basic rights, including rights to education, nutrition, recreation, family care and a peaceful environment, all promises made under the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Trapped in violent ongoing conflicts, children lose their childhood, their opportunities and hope. The global culture of violence, the large scale manufacture and sale of anti-personnel landmines, chemical and other weapons of mass destruction contribute to the horrors of war: the killing, maiming and separation of families; neglect, abuse and exploitation of children, including the use of child soldiers; and sexual violence against girls. The consequent psychological and emotional traumas are immeasurable. The resultant prejudices, fears and hatred foment seeds of future conflict.

The time has come to collectively mobilize national and international public opinion and action against the destructive trend of war and conflict, to build a community and society of tolerance and peace, which respects the dignity of human beings and human rights, which enables our children to grow and to develop their fullest potential.

The participants in this consultation came together to assess the situation of children in armed conflict, to evaluate the appropriateness and adequacy of past and present interventions and to plan for realizable, practical policy formulations and future community, national and international action. Having documented the impact and consequences of war on children in the region, attempts at psychosocial recovery and reintegration into the community, the efforts to promote peace education and peaceful resolution of conflict, and the responses and the lessons learnt, experts presented their findings.

Conscious of the urgent need to reduce the possibilities of conflict arising and/or spreading as well as arresting hostilities and violence and securing peace and recognizing the major role of peace in sustainable development, we make the following recommendations which address the concerns of children in pre-conflict, conflict and post-conflict situations.

Prevention and discontinuance of conflict should be the primary objective of all actions. Thus, greater efforts should be directed to promote effective measures for the prevention of conflict.

Recommendations for action

Child rights

- Encourage Governments, NGOs and international agencies to foster knowledge of the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols and other human rights/humanitarian law instruments among all peoples, especially children, parents, militaries, community leaders, politicians and international NGO and United Nations agency personnel. Education for peaceful resolution of conflict, tolerance, respect for others and the Convention on the Rights of the Child should be incorporated in the curriculum of all formal, non-formal and informal education and training, in a multilingual and cross-cultural fashion, so that the principles become the normal standard of conduct. Such programmes should reflect gender sensitivity in their design;

- Call on Governments, teacher organizations, curriculum developers and United Nations bodies and specialized agencies including UNESCO, UNICEF, UNIFEM, WHO and UNDP to initiate and implement gender-sensitive programmes;

- Urge all Governments in the region to support the adoption and ratification of the proposed draft optional protocol to article 38 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, raising the minimum age for conscription to 18 years and forbidding the direct and indirect participation of children in conflict and hostilities. Government and non-State forces should adopt the principle of non-conscription of children under 18 years old, forthwith, while waiting for the formal adoption of the optional protocol, internationally;

- Urge States to ratify, implement and disseminate information on the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the other human rights and humanitarian law instruments within the spirit and intent of those instruments. States should be encouraged to implement the Convention on the Rights of the Child through comprehensive laws, policies, programmes and practices and to make detailed reports on the situation of children who are affected by armed conflict within their territories;

- The United Nations and regional, political and economic groupings such as the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation and the Association of South-East Asian Nations are urged to assist and facilitate the establishment of individual, institutional and community mechanisms for mediation and negotiation for peace at local, national and international levels for peacemaking and peace-building. The United Nations should encourage regional bodies to actively intervene and mediate in conflicts that threaten peace and children's rights in the region. In addition to regional peace-building mechanisms, such efforts could begin with the

sponsorship and encouragement of all politicians and other influential regional actors, to undertake mediation and negotiation skills, peace and human rights training;

- Encourage States to allocate increased resources for demilitarization, social development and development education (including peace and child rights), so as to create a climate of security and economic stability devoted to bringing about more just and equitable societies, in a democratic tradition;

- Advocate among all parties to conflicts, modalities to implement the concept of children as a zone of peace, through which all the normal developmental needs of children and rights of children under the Convention on the Rights of the Child may be realized. The United Nations, States and non-State forces are encouraged to facilitate the work of national and international agencies and NGOs to create such mechanisms. Recognition of international laws and standards and the involvement of non-governmental armed groups in humanitarian emergency situations should not be construed as tacit recognition of the legitimacy of such armed groups;

- Urge national and international NGOs, and the United Nations humanitarian and emergency bodies to coordinate their aid efforts so that children in situations of armed conflict may benefit from effective responses at all stages of emergencies and respond to the pre-conflict, conflict and post-conflict phases;

- Encourage and assist the media in recognizing its responsibility in the promotion of child rights and the protection of children from exposure that would jeopardize their development and participation;

- In this context, the media can work positively towards the reversal of the current pervasive culture of violence by not sensationalizing violence in the reporting of news and entertainment;

- Urge the media to conduct interviews and reports on children in a manner that protects them from additional trauma;

- NGOs, government and other organizations should work more closely with the media on peace promotion and peace-building in pre-conflict and conflict situations and on potential media roles in disseminating information on child rights, especially of those in situations of armed conflict, and the reporting of human rights violations, especially those enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols;

- Urge the United Nations and all its specialized agencies to place child rights and the issue of children in situations of armed conflicts high on their political and operational agendas.

Demilitarization

- Call upon the United Nations to persuade nations to ban the manufacture, sale and distribution of weapons of war such as anti-personnel landmines, chemical, biological and laser weapons which in the main injure and kill civilians. States Members of the United Nations, which have all pledged their support to the principles of the United Nations, should be urged to discontinue subsidies to all arms manufacturers and to encourage those manufacturers to channel their resources and efforts towards constructive development concerns such as energy production;

- The ideology of militarization continues to dominate States and economies all over the world, leading to competition in the production and possession of increasingly damaging weaponry. In this quest vast resources are channelled into the purchase of arms and militarism has a vice like grip on Governments and armed groups alike. States and Governments need to be sensitized into the realization that it is the people of the nation State that have to be protected and not the notion of a State. Women and children are the most vulnerable of citizens and most in need of protection. To provide such protection a move towards total demilitarization of the mindsets and economies of States is needed;

- Persuade arms manufacturers who produce landmines to make substantial contributions to pay for the clearance of the mines in countries where they have been distributed and used. The proposed draft optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on children in situations of armed conflict may be the means of ensuring the aforesaid. Governments that have subsidized arms manufacturers which have or continue to produce landmines should be persuaded to stop those subsidies and instead, use those funds to clear mines and fund rehabilitation programmes for children injured and maimed by the landmines;

- Encourage United Nations bodies and specialized agencies, local, national and international NGOs and Governments to make a conscious effort to eliminate sexual violence against women and girls in situations of armed conflict and to design gender-sensitive programmes to protect women and girls from the impacts of armed conflict;

- Strongly urge all States in the region which have not signed or ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and other international human rights and humanitarian law instruments, to do so forthwith;

- Urge States and the United Nations to enforce the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their Additional Protocols and to prosecute all who violate children's rights and perpetrate crimes against children in situations of armed conflict. Compensatory war reparation mechanisms, national and international, need to be linked with enforcement mechanisms and provide funds to assist children in the recovery and development processes;

- Urge States and regional bodies to establish mechanisms to promote social justice and reparations, both financial and non-financial, for those whose rights have been violated. These might include tribunals and truth commissions.

Community participation and responsibilities

- Urge Governments and agencies to support the efforts of NGOs and others in the psychosocial recovery and rehabilitation of children who have suffered trauma in conflict situations, through mobilizing the community and designing programmes that involve children in peer groups in these healing and recovery programmes. Enhance the capacity of communities to cope with the demand for psychosocial recovery processes with institutional and human resource development;

- Encourage United Nations agencies and international NGOs to operationalize in their programmes the principle that recovery and reintegration processes must be undertaken at the community level, and use local religious, indigenous and cultural methods and concepts that are meaningful to the people themselves. Psychosocial healing and reconstruction cannot be managed by persons who are alien to the community and psychosocial recovery needs to emphasize the participatory methods appropriate to local cultural and social contexts in order to contribute effectively to the rebuilding process;

- Urge donors, relief, reconstruction and development agencies to be inclusive in addressing social development with economic development and to consider social structural issues as well as individual, social and the psychological well-being, particularly where whole communities have been affected. Encourage the use of existing resources and infrastructure, with training appropriate to their level of ability and to the need for complete coverage in delivering assistance to children in conflict areas;

- Encourage all those involved in psychosocial recovery assistance to be flexible and capable of varied responses, within specified time-frâmes, in order to address the many different types of demands and needs for assistance. Advocate for the development of community based approaches in which generic development is emphasized with occasional social targeting, rather than vice versa. Systematic monitoring and evaluation of the various interventions need to be established at the community level to assess their impact and appropriateness;

- Religious leaders, professionals (especially medical and legal), opinion-makers and all concerned individuals should:

  - Advocate the promotion and protection of the rights of children and in particular the rights of children in situations of armed conflict;

  - Assist in the dissemination, understanding and implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, translated into local languages and dialects, and utilizing local art, initiatives and customs;

- Assist in the establishment and development of minimum moral values in relation to all children, but especially those in situations of armed conflict, and in the building of communities that are concerned and care for their children;

- Initiate the promotion of justice and peace-building in communities through establishing community mechanisms and programmes for the empowerment of children and families and the eradication of violence in the family and community;

- Following the global initiative of the World Conference on Religion and Peace, take local and national multi-religious initiatives to promote inter-ethnic and cross-cultural understanding and tolerance through the mobilization of civil society, especially children and families.

Conclusion

At the heart of protecting and caring for children in situations of armed conflict is the civil society, including children. Civil society needs to be empowered so that children and families, amongst other elements of society, may become more resilient to resist the pressures that threaten the peaceful coexistence of communities. Empowerment of the civil society and tackling the root causes of conflict and violence are vital in enabling peace to prevail. The mobilization of public opinion to prevent conflict, effective intervention in emergencies and the provision of support and recovery services for children during conflict and conflict recovery phases are necessary preconditions for the protection of children in situations of armed conflict.

To promote achievement of these recommendations, national and regional networking will be crucial to facilitate the process of exchange of information regarding best practices within the region.

Workshop One: Adopting a child focused, holistic approach under the Convention on the Rights of the Child for the protection of children in situations of armed conflict

Policies and programmes for children in situations of armed conflict must:

- Consider the best interest of the child through an inter-disciplinary approach which incorporates actions within the following areas:

  - Legal systems and structures;

  - Planning and policy formulation at national and sub-national levels;

  - Institutional support;

  - Resource allocation to operationalize the full implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child;

- Be inclusive of all the categories of children affected by armed conflict such as:
  - Refugee children;
  - Unaccompanied minors;
  - Displaced children;
  - Child soldiers;
  - Children used as instruments in armed conflict (i.e. spies, porters, mine detectors);
  - Child victims of trafficking and sale;
  - Child victims of sexual exploitation and abuse/rape;
  - Children affected by ethnic/racial/religious discord;
  - Children disabled due to armed conflict;
  - Child survivors of massacres;
  - Children orphaned, abandoned or separated from family;
  - Detained and/or tortured children;
- Be flexible in order to have access to all parties in the conflict and to be able to respond even in situations where there is no recognized authority or functional legal systems;
- Be able to mobilize all sectors of civil society, especially the religious and professional groups;
- Mobilize political will at all levels, national and sub-national.

Methods used to create awareness and dissemination of the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child especially education for peace and tolerance should include:

- Multi-modal, multilingual and multi-ethnic approaches appropriate to local needs;
- A decentralized approach which promotes popularization, ownership and demand;
- Participation of children and youth in all aspects of awareness raising and dissemination of the Convention on the Rights of the Child through intra and inter-country networking, the formal, non-formal and informal education system, and action oriented activities - learning through doing - such as community services and peer support groups;

- Establishing linkages with powers that exert influence over armed groups to promote understanding and respect for child rights.

The concepts of children as a zone of peace may be developed and institutionalized in situations of armed conflict to promote interlinkages of the following components:

Geographical/environmental:

- Safe haven zones;
- Corridors of peace;

Physical:

- No child soldiers;
- Non-attack on child targets;
- Days of peace for rendering basic services to children;
- Disaster preparedness;
- Safety precautions for children;

Intellectual:

- Basic education even in armed conflicts;

Psychological:

- Recreational activities;
- Psychosocial and medical support;
- Inter-ethnic/inter-community child to child programmes;

Spiritual:

- Cultural activities;
- Religious/ceremonial;
- Coping with grief/loss.

Workshop Two: Gender and violence in armed conflict situations

The growing recognition of the importance of gender sensitivity and the occurrence of gender violence in the form of systematic use of rape as a weapon and strategy of war against targeted women, added to the phenomenon of premeditated sexual abuse of girls as "comfort women", by soldiers during the period of conflict, has prompted an international outcry for action to protect

women and girls from this form of abuse. The ugly face of this form of violence takes the shape of rape, forced prostitution, trafficking and torture in the military camps and bases and in the area of conflict.

International laws have long mandated the code of conduct of warring states and armies to include the prohibition of rape and abuse of women and children by soldiers and the humane treatment of women and children in times of conflict. Indeed the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 stipulates that women should be especially protected against any attack on their honour, in particular rape, forced prostitution, or any form of indecent assault. The two Additional Protocols of 1977 further provide for the protection of civilians in both international and non-international conflicts. In spite of these international laws, rape has not been recognized as a crime of war although it inherently occurs in wars and armed conflicts.

Recommendation

Recognizing the urgent need to mobilize public opinion against the use of gender violence as a weapon of war in armed conflict situations, calls upon the Graça Machel study and the United Nations to:

- Declare rape, forced prostitution, the abduction, torture and trafficking in women and girls and the use of women and girls as "comfort women" as war crimes punishable through court martial or judicial mechanisms so that justice and peace may triumph;

- Where the States themselves are parties to the crime, alternative jurisprudence and judicial mechanisms need to be evolved to ensure that equity and justice may prevail to make war reparation and compensation to the injured;

- Promote the awareness of the principles and standards of the international human rights instruments, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and gender awareness through their incorporation into the training curriculum of all military academies and institutions. Gender training in the military should be carried out not as an impersonal exercise but as one where a women is identified as a mother or sister and not merely as an "object". Training material should be developed with this in mind.

In the dissemination of the principles of human rights and humanitarian law instruments generally, and especially to the military:

1. Integrate education and orientation on human rights and humanitarian law instruments in basic military training, starting with the United Nations peacekeeping forces.

2. Give visibility to the brutality of war and expose soldiers to this as part of military training, through the production and dissemination of materials showing the impact of war on women and children.

3. The primary school education of all children should include a strong value component of respect for life. This fundamental premise ensures the protection of all human rights. Respect for life should be a part of each individual's value system.

On the subject of how best to protect women and children against gender violence in armed conflicts:

1. Teach women and girls how to p >tect themselves.

2. Teach parents how to protect their children.

3. Teach communities to organize themselves in the protection of their children.

4. When mobilizing and teaching communities, it is important to include men, as they are the brothers and fathers of the girls who may be at risk.

On how women can usefully participate in peace promotion and conflict prevention:

1. Improve the status of women to make such participation possible.

2. Teach and encourage men and women to participate in the peace education of their children.

3. Teach men and women the possibility of promoting peace by nourishing peaceful homes.

4. Facilitate the process of involving women in the peace mediation and negotiation attempts.

5. Encourage the active participation of women in the peacemaking and peace-building efforts so as to promote a culture of peace.

6. Conscious effort should be made to include women in negotiation teams, bodies relating to arms control, war tribunals and committees relating to human rights.

Workshop Three: Access to Justice

Recommendations

In a conflict situation, we can assure access to justice for women and children by strengthening the pillars of the justice system through the training and education of personnel in law enforcement, prosecution, the judiciary correction/rehabilitation of offenders system and through the involvement of the community in making justice accessible to women and children.

Further, through affording protection and security measures for those involved in the prosecution of cases such as witness protection programmes and providing security for judges and prosecutors.

The independence of the legal and judicial system is an absolute precondition in ensuring that justice is available to all in armed conflict situations. Where the justice system has been destroyed as a result of the conflict, alternative means of legal redress should be explored and established. In seeking to establish a given model of an alternative justice system, all issues need to be considered critically.

War reparation and compensation mechanisms should be established where human rights violations have taken place. There should be advocacy nationally for:

- Political will to effectively prosecute rights violators;
- Establishment of efficient and independent judicial systems;
- Promotion of mechanisms to assist those seeking redress;

internationally for:

- Universal signing, ratification and implementation of the human rights instruments;
- Negotiation with and commitment from non-State forces to international human rights instruments, especially the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Encourage Governments, NGOs and agencies to view reparation both in financial and social terms.

Annex V

STATEMENT OF THE FIFTH REGIONAL CONSULTATION ON THE IMPACT OF ARMED CONFLICT ON CHILDREN IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

(Santafé de Bogotá, 17-19 April 1996)

The regional consultation noted that besides the injustice and inequalities in the region there were still armed conflicts of different kinds affecting various countries, which had led to transgressions of international humanitarian law and violations of human rights. The consultation emphasized the cases of Colombia and Peru in the Andean region, and of Guatemala in Central America, countries in which armed conflicts were still going on or in the process of pacification. In both Nicaragua and El Salvador peace accords had been reached. They now face new challenges in the aftermath of armed conflict, such as assistance to repatriated and relocated populations in need of socio-economic and psychosocial recuperation.

Conflict, inequality and injustice still make up a cruel vicious circle in the region. The consultation declared the situation to be unjust, unnecessary and unacceptable and that its causes and symptoms must be acted on at all levels and in all its complexities: political, judicial, economic, social, psychological, moral and spiritual.

Children in these countries have suffered extreme violence in the form of deaths, injury, abuse, torture, mutilation, psychological trauma, recruitment both in the armed forces and insurgent groups, exile, forced disappearance and separation from their families. The resources spent on the war violate children's right to development and deprive them of access to health, education, basic social welfare, employment and income. There are thousands of orphans and young widows who must cope with the needs of their children without preparation or support from the State and society.

The consultation recognized that the issues of peace and justice are inseparable. It also recognized that the causes and actions violating international humanitarian law, international rights of refugees and international human rights are not addressed properly and remain unpunished.

The consultation also discussed the following issues: children's human rights in armed conflict, the right to full humanitarian assistance and psychosocial recuperation, especially in the context of the Convention on the Rights of the child, the international rights of refugees and international humanitarian law. Long-term prevention measures are needed to reduce the effects of armed conflicts and to promote justice, tolerance and peace; to stimulate the rich cultural heritage of the region that protects children; to prevent conflicts by emphasizing multiculturalism and pluralism; and to promote a change of values, attitudes and conduct of Governments and civil societies, in order to minimize the consequences of conflicts and children's suffering.

Aware of the affects of armed conflicts on children, the consultation called upon the States and the armed groups involved to search for negotiated

solutions to armed conflicts. These agreements must include mechanisms for verification, including citizen monitoring and verification of compliance.

While this goal is being achieved, the consultation requested States and armed groups in conflict to provide children with maximum protection based on principles of humanity, thereby complying with civil society's commitment and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

I. CHILDREN AS A SPACE OF CONSENSUS IN THE PEACE PROCESS

The consultation recognized the need to visualize childhood as a zone of peace and urgently recommended the enforcement of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and international humanitarian law. In those countries ravaged by armed conflicts, the consultation confirmed that the civilian population, children in particular, are the principal victims. In these countries, the enforcement of international law must be achieved in order to protect children from the horrors of war. As examples of such space of consensus some countries have created "corridors of peace" and launched "days of tranquillity".

Recommendations to Governments, civil society, international agencies and non-governmental organizations

- To promote and offer compulsory human rights and child rights training programmes to all security forces, including the proper treatment of child soldiers and children suffering the consequences of war;

- To create a space where children can express their opinions and present proposals relating to the peace process;

- To cooperate and coordinate programmes that protect children against war and its indirect impact by promoting efforts to achieve a cease fire, thereby strengthening the ability of communities to protect their children;

- To disseminate international and national norms on the rights of children and adolescents, especially those stating that children should not participate in armed conflicts directly or indirectly;

- To use all possible means to disseminate the fundamental principles of respect for children (the formal and informal educational systems, the media, etc.) with the participation of all sectors of the population including children and adolescents and the community based organizations at the local, regional and national levels;

- To reach a consensus among the partners in conflict to unconditionally protect any programme, infrastructure or activity which involves services to children, such as schools, hospitals and health centres;

- To work towards the elaboration of an inter-American declaration of the rights of the child;

- To urge the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights to emphasize in its reports the situation of children affected by armed conflict and to recommend the prohibition of recruitment of children under 18 years of age. The Commission should also condemn violations of international humanitarian law, and violations of fundamental rights and liberties perpetrated by non-governmental agents;

- To promote alternative ways of income generation and employment for young persons as well as better educational opportunities in order to discourage child recruitment;

- To immediately demobilize child combatants in the armed forces. To establish programmes and mechanisms for the peaceful reintegration of child combatants into society. Once reintegrated into civil society, particular care should be taken to avoid the continuation of violent conduct and attitudes. This could be achieved through psychosocial and educational programmes.

Recommendations to national and international child protection organizations

- To promote the strengthening and coordination of educational child rights programmes;

- To support the proposed draft optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

II. APPLICATION OF INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW

The consultation stressed the importance of international humanitarian law, which guarantees the minimum rights of all person and the humanization of armed conflicts based on the distinction between combatants and non-combatants and between military infrastructure and civilian infrastructure, and includes the prohibition on the use of certain weapons such as landmines. International humanitarian law covers all children, combatants or not.

Recommendations to States

- To include in national legislation the necessary provisions for the application of international humanitarian law, the international rights of refugees and the Convention on the Rights of the Child;

- To call the inter-American system's attention to the need for protection of children affected by armed conflict;

- To include in peace negotiations the distinction between political crimes and crimes against human integrity, thereby avoiding impunity in the case of severe crimes and crimes against humanity;

- To include in the peace negotiations the demilitarization and disarmament of the civilian population;

- To increase significantly the knowledge of the international rights of refugees and international humanitarian law. In particular, States should include systematic teaching of these rights in the curricula of military academies and also disseminate this information to the civilian population;

- To honour and comply with their international agreements as defined in the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and the Additional Protocols of 1977 in relation to the obligation of States Parties to punish crimes of war and violations of international humanitarian law. To develop efficient mechanisms to punish crimes against humanity and violations of human rights;

- To strengthen international control of arms traffic and to further develop measures of transparency and registration of arms in the Disarmament Commission of the United Nations;

- To prohibit the recruitment of children under 18 years of age in the armed forces making use of international and national laws and to promote a reform of article 38 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child prohibiting the recruitment of children under 18 years of age;

- To forbid the use of landmines and other explosives, the employment of children for search and destruction of mines, as well as the access of children to mined territories. Action should be taken at local, national, regional and global levels;

- To promote educational campaigns to increase awareness and action by all sectors of society concerning the ban on landmines;

- To dismantle and prohibit groups of armed civilians organized by the military for intelligence gathering and local vigilance.

Recommendations to armed insurgent groups

- To honour and comply with international humanitarian law, especially in reference to children, in accordance with Protocols I and II additional to the Geneva Conventions of 1949;

- To forbid recruitment of persons under the age of eighteen, particularly if force or delusion is used;

- To not use children in the local production of landmines or in their search and destruction. To prevent children's access to mined territory.

III. EXPERIENCES IN REHABILITATION AND PSYCHOSOCIAL RECUPERATION

Recommendations to Governments, international organizations and non-governmental organizations

- To develop training programmes to improve the technical capacity of Governments and public community services aimed at the social integration and psychosocial recuperation of children. This training should be extended to families, teachers, health providers and others;

- To develop programmes for the psychosocial recuperation of children, their rehabilitation and care. Access to these services should be seen as a basic right of all children, in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child;

- To promote the active participation of all sectors of society in the above programmes;

- Special programmes for girls who have been the victims of rape exploitation and other abuse should be established;

- To establish monitoring mechanisms to verify the compliance of the above programmes by civil society.

IV. REFUGEE AND DISPLACED CHILDREN IN ARMED CONFLICT

The consultation acknowledged that internal displacement and the exodus of refugees presents serious socio-demographic and human rights problems which affect the civil population and children especially.

Recommendations to Governments, international organizations and non-governmental organizations

- To identify, give due attention to and adopt the necessary measures related to the structural causes that generate displacement of the population, such as internal armed conflict, war practices violating international humanitarian law, inequitable land tenure, unjust distribution of income, impunity, injustice and inequitable economic models;

- To increase their activity in relation to children affected by armed conflicts. To summon an international conference on displaced, refugee and repatriated peoples in the Andean region as a means of opening a discussion on issues related to children and displacement. The international conference should count on the participation of the countries involved, intra-governmental organizations, non-governmental human rights organizations and representatives of the displaced and refugee population;

- Since the economic situation of the region and the countries is significantly linked to displacement and refugee processes, the basic

economic rights of the population and the furthering of actions geared to improved equity in the region should be emphasized;

- International aid agencies/organizations should recognize the needs of the populations affected by armed conflict, in particular the precarious economic situation of children;

- During and after the return of refugee and displaced persons, it is important to coordinate the different stages of reintegration: emergency assistance (transportation, food, housing), immediate response assistance (tools, seeds, housing), integrated programmes of sustainable development (basic sanitation) and monitoring;

- To prevent and avoid stigmatization and discrimination of displaced persons and refugees which may impede their social and economic integration;

- To guarantee school reintegration and psychosocial support to displaced, refugee and repatriated children.

Recommendations to Governments

- To identify, give due attention to and adopt the necessary measures related to the structural causes that generate displacement of the population, such as internal armed conflict, war practices violating international humanitarian law, inequitable land tenure, unjust distribution of income, impunity, injustice and inequitable economic models;

- To elaborate policies to prevent impunity for actions causing displacement and impeding the displaced population's return to their residencies of origin. Also, to take preventive action to control potential factors of insecurity in the areas receiving returnees;

- To create spaces of participation in the peace negotiations for refugees, displaced and repatriated populations, including children, in order for them to be able to voice their proposals;

- Owing to the massive character of the displacements, all resources of the community must be used, especially in terms of treatment and solidarity with children. Community-based organizations must be supported as a means to guarantee the participation of the beneficiaries in the programmes;

- To prevent the discrimination and stigmatization of displaced and refugee persons which impede social and economic reinsertion, countries that receive exiled and refugee children must guarantee the rights to non-discrimination and equality as stated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child;

- To forbid the participation of displaced, refugee or repatriated children in armed conflicts;

- To recommend the adoption of refugee or displaced children as a last resort in accordance with the Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation

in respect of Inter-Country Adoption signed at the Hague in 1994. An ample period of time should be allowed before family, community and local reinsertion alternatives are considered exhausted. Decisions on adoption should always be based on the child's best interest;

- To create legal mechanisms for refugees and displaced persons to solve problems such as: documentation, identification problems, efficient protection of their lives and physical integrity, resolution of their military status, and the legal protection of property rights and belongings abandoned in their place of origin;

- To create safety guarantees for groups and organizations working in conflict zones in favour of displaced and repatriated populations;

- To offer emergency as well as medium and long-term programmes in humanitarian assistance. Programmes should be offered for basic welfare and to support income generating activities;

- To create a national information network to anticipate situations which may cause displacement of population, and to elaborate programmes with populations at risk of becoming displaced;

- To strengthen institutions such as the Central Tracing Agency of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in order to facilitate the search and reunification of families. In the case of refugees, unaccompanied children should be immediately identified in order to assure their reunification with their families;

- To promote research to identify the priorities of affected populations and to assure that assistance reach the poorest groups in the most affected areas;

- To support the processes of organization, self-management and recuperation in the receiving communities as well as in the new communities formed by the refugee, displaced and repatriated populations;

- In the context of the return of the above-mentioned populations, Governments have to design an integral and coherent plan of action based on an analysis of the situation of the affected population. This plan should include: (a) the different groups and circumstances involved in the return itself, and its political, social, economic and structural implications, as well as the particular character of the displacement, and (b) the requirement that the return takes place under conditions of security and dignity that facilitate reintegration into productive activities;

- The desire to return of each displaced person must be verified. Additionally it is necessary to guarantee the safety of those who return as well as assuring their right to previously abandoned land, housing and other belongings. Furthermore, it should be assured that the returnees are welcome by the current population in the place of return. This could be achieved by appropriate preparation of the returnees and of the population currently living in the abandoned areas;

- To assure minimal conditions for the return of children and to provide for family reunification using psycho-pedagogical methods to facilitate a smooth reunification;

- To guarantee the refugees their identification and personal documentation. To ensure that legislation gives priority to refugee children and facilitates the provision of citizenship to refugee children. To guarantee the reintegration into the educational system as well as psychosocial support during the process;

- To solicit from the United Nations documented programmes of experiences of populations affected by armed conflicts.

V. THE IMPACT OF THE ECONOMIC EMBARGO ON CHILDREN

The consultation analysed the documents prepared by the delegations of Haiti, Cuba and Nicaragua concerning the disastrous effects of economic embargoes imposed on these countries, especially in relation to the human rights of the population including the rights of children.

The consultation joined the international condemnation of economic embargo as a means of political coercion and adopted the recommendations made by the delegation from Haiti:

Recommendations to Governments and international agencies

- To elaborate and enforce economic and social policies that prevent poverty, inequity and injustice as the principal way to avoid armed conflicts. Necessary resources to achieve this should be assigned with special consideration to children;

- When it is not possible to avoid armed conflict, the national and international authorities should take the necessary steps to guarantee the protection of human rights of the most vulnerable groups, especially the rights of children;

- To resolve conflicts, sanctions which involve the entire population of a country, in particular commercial embargoes which violate the basic human rights of innocent citizens, especially younger ones, should not be imposed;

- Sanctions may in principle contribute to the solution of conflicts if they are designed to change the individual conduct of those responsible for the violation of national or international social order. This means that sanctions cannot be measures applicable to all cases, but rather that they must be designed taking into account the particular weaknesses of the political or military leaders whose conduct the international community seeks to change. Even so, before implementation, measures must be evaluated according to their potential to violate the basic human rights of vulnerable groups;

- In the case that sanctions are imposed on a country and during their implementation, the Security Council of the United Nations must simultaneously provide resources to neutral and independent national organizations to establish the minimum criteria required for the careful monitoring of the situation of vulnerable groups. Any deterioration in the socio-economic, psychosocial and human rights indicators, included in the monitoring system, must be immediately reported to the United Nations which would assume the responsibility of mobilizing resources to improve the situation. This system of monitoring must be an ongoing process even after the sanctions have been lifted in order to find out the consequences of sanctions on vulnerable groups;

- One or more sanctions should not be allowed to continue indefinitely. If the desired goal is not achieved within the predetermined period of time, the sanctions must be lifted and replaced by more effective ones;

- The term "human rights" is to be understood in reference to the rights included in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and other international and regional declarations on human rights.

Annex VI

STATEMENT OF THE SIXTH REGIONAL CONSULTATION ON THE IMPACT OF ARMED CONFLICT ON CHILDREN IN EUROPE

(Florence, 10-12 June 1996)

EUROPE AND THE PREVENTION OF CHILD RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

All situations of armed conflict entail great danger and suffering for civilians, especially for children. With the end of the cold war, the world has seen a proliferation of internal conflicts which have directly targeted civilian populations. This has had serious effects on the well-being of children. In Europe, as well as elsewhere in the world, armed conflict has killed or wounded children, separated them from their families and made them witness to violence, which has caused severe psychological trauma. They have become refugees or have been displaced. Sometimes they have been recruited as combatants.

The potential for peacemaking

When the government structure collapses in internal conflicts, peacemaking becomes still more difficult as shown by the failure of "Operation Restore Hope in Somalia". The response in some quarters has been to call for a policy of pragmatic non-engagement in the upheavals of the South, to draw a line between the "barbarian world" and the "civilized" one.

But other, more constructive approaches are also emerging. Even as the actors engaged in war have multiplied, so have the actors of peace. There is a growing recognition that the construction of peace requires a complexity of approaches that go beyond the purely military, that peace has to mature within the situation. It is not founded on the defeat of a party, it must be founded on a consensus of all parties.

A non-governmental organization (NGO) with no interest to defend in the country at conflict may be able to intervene in ways that would not be accepted from other parties. An NGO also has the advantage of flexibility in its approach. But there is no model for success. Mediation by the Rome-based Community of Sant'Egidio, for example, succeeded in the case of Mozambique where there was a demand for peace from all sides, but its attempt to promote dialogue among the warring parties in Algeria failed because of the caution of the international community, which feared any action that might destabilize a Government fighting against fundamentalist terrorists.

Accountability as a deterrent

Accountability is the best deterrent. The most effective way of curbing criminal conduct and protecting the innocent is to instil in potential criminals the fear of getting caught. But, unfortunately, a double standard exists between criminal conduct in the national and international spheres. A criminal who violates a national law will be sought in whatever country he or she takes refuge, but this is not true for a violator of international humanitarian law.

If young children are accused of war crimes, they should be rehabilitated, not prosecuted or punished. What presents a more difficult problem is using children as witnesses.

The creation of the international criminal tribunal for former Yugoslavia was a huge step forward, but its effectiveness is jeopardized by the failure of the international community to arrest and bring to trial those who have been indicted as war criminals. It is up to international NGOs to raise an outcry.

And more is needed. An international mechanism should be brought into effect so that every citizen of every country, not just Bosnia and Herzegovina and Rwanda, is responsible for his or her actions. There should be an international prosecutor's office in every country to make leaders aware that if they do not implement international humanitarian law there is at least a prospect that they will be called to account.

The trial of war criminals is part of the healing process. To have made promises to victims and let them down is to punish them twice. In many ways, if the international community does not follow through on the creation of the tribunals on war crimes committed in former Yugoslavia and Rwanda it would have been better not to have set them up in the first place.

Fusing human rights and international humanitarian law

That human rights and international humanitarian law belong together, not side-by-side, is a revolutionary concept. Human rights law set standards while humanitarian law accepted that "boys will be boys" and tried to limit their actions. Human rights law only dealt with Governments and allowed Governments to get off the hook by pointing at the opposition. But, starting with Central America in the 1980s, this has begun to change. With the end of the cold war, when everything was compartmentalized, new possibilities have emerged. An organization such as Amnesty International now examines the conduct of Governments as well.

Basic recommendations

In working group discussions, there was general agreement that the Convention on the Rights of the Child and humanitarian and human rights law were basic tools for preventing violations of child rights. In order to better utilize them, working groups made the following recommendations:

- States should fulfil their obligation to translate the 1949 Geneva Conventions, their Additional Protocols of 1977 and the Convention on the Rights of the Child into their national languages and adopt laws and regulations to ensure their application;

- Governments should enact into national law provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols. This would help government officials to familiarize themselves with the laws and disseminate them and allow violators to be prosecuted in the national domain;

- Governments should refer to the Convention on the Rights of the Child in bilateral and multilateral actions, including the targeting of aid;

- Governments should discipline violators of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and international humanitarian and human rights law;

- The United Nations should make a public commitment to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and international humanitarian and human rights law;

- All humanitarian agencies and organizations should incorporate these standards into their own operations and training, disseminate them and abide by them in their dealings with Governments and non-State actors;

- The international community, through major NGOs, should promote and, where necessary, provide funds to train and educate all military personnel, including peacekeepers, and civilian society, particularly schoolchildren, about the Convention on the Rights of the Child and international humanitarian and refugee law;

- The Department of Peacekeeping Operations of the Secretariat should incorporate these standards into its training guidelines.

Other recommendations included:

1. Prevention through international cooperation:

- States should seek to restrict arms flows, both official and illicit, to countries where the arms risk fuelling rather than preventing violent conflicts. Landmines continue to kill and maim civilians, particularly children, not only during warfare, but for many years afterward. A worldwide ban should be imposed on the manufacture, sale and use of landmines;

- States should support preventive diplomacy, and there should be an immediate international response on the ground, with special attention to the plight of children, in countries where rising tensions threaten to erupt violently on a large scale;

- States should review existing mechanisms for international cooperation in response to conflict and the need to protect children from the effects of that conflict and should seek to remove institutional and political constraints to these approaches;

- International relief responses mounted by European countries must seek to more actively address the underlying causes of conflict and to restore local capacity to resolve social tensions and meet the needs of children. It is best to reconstruct existing infrastructure, use surviving systems and employ local authorities than to import new ones from outside;

- The international response to conflict must be more comprehensive. Where tensions threaten to erupt violently, European countries must provide the political will and the responses needed to support preventive diplomacy;

- Where violence has erupted, the international humanitarian response must adopt a longer-term vision and seek to lay the groundwork in its direct activities for the recovery of war-torn societies;

- In the context of diminishing aid budgets among European countries and the institutionalization of short-term emergency responses, greater support for local capacities is needed to achieve sustainable longer-term and more strategic responses.

2. Promoting, monitoring and enforcing international humanitarian law:

- In order to facilitate family reunification, Governments should seek to ensure, even at times of conflict, that there is a system for registering births and for providing documentation. A guardian should be named for any child without a family;

- The flow of humanitarian aid should be regarded as an international responsibility, and Governments should use their influence on parties to the conflict to ensure that the aid flows freely to those who need it;

- Governments and international organizations should ensure that the mandates of peacekeeping operations reflect humanitarian concerns, including the rights and needs of children. The mandates should support humanitarian objectives and portions of assessed contributions should be specifically designated to provide immediate post-conflict assistance to children;

- International and intergovernmental organizations should strengthen their cooperation;

- In emergency situations when a considerable number of NGOs are present in the field they should establish a coordinating body to monitor initiatives on children's rights and other NGO activities. Building on existing structures and using people who have local knowledge, this body should ensure that NGOs meet, share information and have a common strategy to avoid overlap, gaps and mistakes;

- Humanitarian organizations should ensure that their staff receive adequate training and education in international humanitarian law;

- NGOs should apply the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief;

- States should give additional means to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to monitor human rights law relating to children throughout conflicts from as many sources as possible, not only to

record violations but to develop preventative programmes and a compilation of good practice;

- International legislation concerning violence against children should include universal jurisdiction for the prosecution of criminals, regardless of where the crimes against children took place;

- All States should ensure that they have adequate penal laws to cover war crimes and participate in the creation of an international criminal court. Children accused of war crimes should be rehabilitated rather than punished.

3. Respect for human rights in armed conflict:

- States should support legislation for and promote an international ban on the recruitment by both State and non-State actors of child soldiers under the age of 18, rather than the current age of 15;

- Humanitarian agencies and organizations should seek to reach signed agreements with non-State entities containing their commitment to humanitarian and human rights law, particularly with respect to children, in the areas in which they operate;

- Humanitarian agencies and organizations and other international bodies operating in the field should establish procedures for confidential reporting of violations and their transmittal to the appropriate bodies;

- Humanitarian agencies and organizations should consider ways in which they can assist follow-ups to the United Nations human rights mechanisms;

- The United Nations Centre for Human Rights should ensure that humanitarian agencies and operations are adequately informed about international human rights standards and monitoring mechanisms;

- Children in situations of armed conflict should be given supranational status to make international intervention on their behalf possible;

- The following problems should also be taken into consideration:

  - Hate that leads to the desire to totally eliminate the enemy;

  - The impact of sanctions on children;

  - The compartmentalization of laws and concepts between agencies and NGOs in terms of mandate, some community-based, other child-oriented which leads to "thinking in boxes";

  - Gaps that Governments cannot cover in planning to protect children during and after conflict even when they include humanitarian organizations in the implementation;

- How to address non-State actors;

- Dilemmas for humanitarian agencies/organizations as regards human rights violations they witness;

- The recognition that aid is not necessarily always "neutral" and "good" by definition;

- The tendency for emergency responses and international human rights and humanitarian law standards to be divorced from each other.

4. The potential of civil society for securing conflict resolution:

- To assist in early warning of impending conflicts, international organizations should seek "to open a window" for the systematic and active participation of civil society. One way of doing this could be to create a forum to ensure better access to relevant information on past and present conflicts and those that are brewing and to allow the regular exchange of information on specific cases, holding meetings and planning action;

- There is a need among those in authority to find ways of locating potential perpetrators of violence and intervening before they commit actions leading to conflict;

- If European-based initiatives are to play a constructive role, consultation with civil society in the country is vital to ensure cooperation. Closer cooperation and coordination is needed among relief agencies and NGOs and between them and Governments, peacekeeping forces and local authorities;

- Before attempting to resolve a conflict, it is necessary to know the reasons why it arose, all the actors as well as the potential for mobilization for conflict resolution. It is also necessary to recognize that a larger conflict can give rise to mini-conflicts, which are self-perpetuating and not necessarily resolved along with the larger conflict;

- It becomes easier to resolve a conflict when one party has achieved what it sought or when one party realizes it is to its political advantage to stop the conflict. One function of civil society is to identify those factors that make it advantageous to stop conflict and to make them known to the parties concerned;

- In order to "teach peace" after a conflict, national teachers unions should hold consultations on how curricula can serve to contain manifestations of nationalism - as opposed to patriotism - anger and aggression. The curricula should try to help children and young people see the effects of war on themselves, their families and their communities;

- It is also important to listen to children, especially to adolescents, who are often seen as less vulnerable but can actually be more so in specific ways;

- Solidarity that grew up in conflict situations should be supported;

- The role of international organizations is to support knowledge centres in service to the population, invest in research on civil-mindedness and back efforts by civil society to promote it;

- Action by the international community is needed to prevent Governments and parts of the world inciting hatred against other countries or regions they have labelled the "international enemy".

Annex VII

STATEMENT ADOPTED BY THE WORLD CONFERENCE ON RELIGION AND PEACE

CHILDREN AND VIOLENT CONFLICT

For countless children there is no peace, only terror. Caught in violent conflicts, they are enduring almost unimaginable suffering. Children are losing life, wholeness, home, family, opportunity and hope. Their innocence and openness, which call us to cherish and protect them, leave children especially vulnerable to evil. Learnt hatreds, fears, and enmities are planting in children the seeds of future conflict.

In an unspeakable perversion of innocence, more and more children are being drawn as soldiers into violence they are too young to resist and the consequences of which they cannot imagine. This assault on their childhood is intolerable, our failure to respond a betrayal, our silence complicity.

Our common voice cries out in anguish and protest.

Each of our religious traditions affirms the sanctity and promise of the child. If we fail to protect our children, we deny our humanity, risk our future and betray our beliefs. We declare that it can be otherwise. Together we must find the will to heal and share our world so that our children will be safe to grow to the fullness of life.

The legion of low intensity conflicts; guerrilla wars; rebellions; revolutions; struggles between communal, ethnic and religious groups; and the systemic violence which fuels them must be overcome. Their devastation disproportionately afflicts our children.

We speak hereby to the United Nations, heads of State and Government, to the leaders of civil and political movements, to our religious communities and to all, throughout the world, who have held a child in love, with joy for its life, with tears for its pain.

Confident of the goodness and commitment of countless women and men around the world to care for children,

WE CALL UPON all parties, however different their roles, in armed conflicts - States' armies and militias, revolutionary parties and people's movements, United Nations forces - to conduct themselves in accordance with the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, notably article 38, and other relevant provisions of international law regarding the safety and well-being of children.

WE FURTHER CALL UPON

1. The United Nations system, in particular UNICEF, and regional multilateral organizations to:

- Encourage States to ratify and implement the Convention on the Rights of the Child and to monitor the same;

- Facilitate the approval and implementation of the draft optional protocol on armed conflict to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, regarding child soldiers;

- Establish an international mechanism to monitor the compliance of non-State parties with the protection of children as set forth by the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other relevant provisions of international law;

- Evaluate sanctions based on an assessment of their impact on children and adjust their implementation to assure that children are not further victimized;

- Coordinate all responses to armed conflict within the United Nations system to maximize the protection of children;

- Urge the General Assembly to establish a permanent subsidiary judicial organ to bring to trial and justice all State and non-State actors involved in armed conflict that violate the laws and customs of war relating to children and in particular article 38 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the optional protocol on armed conflict to the Convention as and when it is in force.

2. State Governments to:

- Ratify and implement the Convention on the Rights of the Child and to withdraw all reservations regarding the Convention and bring national laws into conformity with it;

- Adopt the draft optional protocol on armed conflict to the Convention on the Rights of the Child which sets forth that States parties shall take all feasible measures to ensure that persons who have not attained the age of 18 years shall not take part in armed conflicts;

- Halt the production, sale or purchase, and use of weapons that inflict indiscriminate harm on children, particularly landmines;

- Establish a ministry or department charged with safeguarding the welfare of children, where such does not exist.

3. People's movements and other groups seeking political change to:

- Adhere to humane and internationally established norms in the pursuit of morally defensible goals, so as not to compromise the integrity and moral legitimacy of their struggles;

- Develop internal standards of discipline and enforcement procedures that respect human rights and values and which are harmonious with the model of society to which they are aspiring;

- Ensure the protection and care for all children in conflict zones and refugee centres;

- Forswear the impressment or induction of children under 18 years of age into military or military-support activities.

4. Religious and civic leaders to:

- Work with where they exist and initiate where needed National Committees on the Rights of the Child, consisting of experts of high moral character and recognized competence, to monitor and make public the compliance of their Governments with the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

5. The media in its multiple forms to:

- Educate the public on the needs of children, particularly those caught in armed conflict;

- Critically examine their own sensationalization of violence in both the reportage of news and in entertainment;

- Conduct interviews and report on children in such ways as to not compound their trauma.

6. Men and women of goodwill and non-governmental organizations operating around the world to:

- Take initiatives to assist children exposed to violence and conflict;

- Advocate for and lend support to civil and political efforts designed to save, protect and care for children in situations of conflict;

- Support calls for assistance to children in areas of conflict;

- Listen and learn from children who have been victims of violent conflict and enable their appropriate participation in programmes that are relevant to the protection of children in such situations;

- Translate human rights language in understandable terms, for example, using stories and the language of local traditions and customs;

- Assist in building a climate of moral concern and community care in which children can survive and flourish.

7. Religious communities to:

- Re-examine their tradition's teaching regarding the child and, in particular, discern its meaning as it relates to the child soldier;

- Educate their adherents and members to the tragedy and special needs of children in armed conflicts; teach peace and peacemaking, respect and acceptance of "the other", and appreciation for diversity;

- Pursue and support advocacy regarding the critical considerations of children;

- Cooperate with the United Nations and UNICEF in disseminating information on the needs of children;

- Exert high-profile, non-governmental leadership in monitoring international standards for the protection of children;

- Promote and engage in humanitarian actions to assist children in need;

- Seek to protect the child - especially the girl child - from sexual abuse in situations of violent conflict;

- Ensure that the integrity of the beliefs of victims of war can be safeguarded in adoption practices, the care of refugees, and the delivery of other forms of humanitarian assistance;

- Assist victims in their efforts to sustain their religious practice;

- Promote tolerance, respect and understanding for people of other faiths in order to minimize conflict among religious bodies;

- Promote and engage in multi-religious actions to assist children in need.

8. World Conference on Religion and Peace to:

- Expand its work regarding children in order to support, enable and facilitate all of the above;

- Initiate multi-religious cooperation in order to assist the child victims of violent conflicts, including refugees and orphans;

- Encourage its constituencies to join the anti-landmine campaign;

- Pursue current efforts in continuity with its 1990 Princeton Declaration of World Religious Leaders, "The World's Religions for the World's Children".

Annex VIII

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